

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, may I say that the larger irrigation projects are not under the P.F.R.A. vote. They are not conducted directly under this act. I do not like a discussion to start which might have to be stopped a little later on, after certain ideas had been expressed by some hon. members. I am raising the question of order at this time, before the discussion goes so far that others may feel it necessary to speak on the South Saskatchewan project.

Mr. Coldwell: I do not want to transgress the rules; I try to abide by them closely, but my understanding is that these officials of the P.F.R.A. are engaged in surveys for this project. If the minister himself had not mentioned irrigation in connection with these engineers, while I had these quotations in my desk ready for a suitable occasion, probably I would not have discussed the matter now. But I thought this might be an opportune moment to bring it to the attention of the minister and exert more pressure on the government in order that this project may be commenced. If I am not in order I certainly will not proceed, but in view of the fact that these officials are conducting surveys in connection with this project, and that the minister himself had said that other departments were trying to steal the engineers who are dealing with it, I thought that gave me an opportunity to bring a little more pressure on the government with a view to having this work started immediately.

Mr. Gardiner: Still on the point of order, Mr. Chairman, there is a great deal of activity and work in connection with irrigation in addition to these larger projects. A considerable part of P.F.R.A. work is in connection with such projects as East End and Val Marie, which do involve irrigation. To put the matter quite fairly, however, I think the only part of the work associated with the South Saskatchewan which P.F.R.A. has been doing is the investigational work.

The Chairman: The present resolution relates to a specific measure, and I do not think that under it we can discuss the whole question of irrigation.

Mr. Coldwell: Well, Mr. Chairman, I do not want to dispute your ruling, but I thought in view of what this involves I was right in discussing these matters at this time. However, I have pretty well said what I wanted to say—that is, to press the government to begin this project at once and fulfil the promises the minister has made from time to time concerning it.

Mr. Gardiner: That is the very question on which I do not want to get into a discussion. I do not make promises; I state facts.

Mr. Argue: When did you quit?

Mr. Gardiner: In the thirty-eight years I have been in politics I have never made promises to anybody. I have waited until it was a matter of fact and could be stated as something with which we were going to proceed; then I have said we were proceeding with it.

Mr. Coldwell: In the quotations I have read I think the minister said clearly the fact was that this project would be started. On October 20, 1941, he is reported as having said:

Most of the money would be provided by the federal government, because it could not be expected that Saskatchewan, subject to drought, could carry the load of such a capital expenditure.

Now that the province has agreed to pay a substantial proportion of the cost, the work should be undertaken without further delay.

Mr. Gardiner: This morning I was going over a return ordered by this house having to do with this very matter; I will see that it is brought down within the next week. It has all the papers, and the facts do not bear out the statement that I made any promises to anybody. I read them all this morning.

Mr. Quelch: I was going to ask the minister some questions about the Red Deer diversion project, but I presume he would prefer that I wait until we come to item 46 of the estimates. However, I should like to ask one question about these officials who may be superannuated in future. Just what officials are included? I take it that would mean the engineers and district supervisors; and does it include the field supervisors as well?

Mr. Gardiner: That is all in the bill. It includes engineers, clerks and stenographers—that is, generally speaking the inside staff plus the engineering staffs who are outside. It does not include all persons engaged in engineering work, such as the rodmen and others who are appointed to engineering parties that go out in the summer. They are not included. It is the general interpretation adopted by the various departments of the government.

Mr. Quelch: I take it, then, that it will include the district supervisors. It has been suggested that some of those are what might be termed political appointees. It just happens that the supervisor in the special areas of Alberta was a defeated Liberal candidate, but in spite of that fact he happens to be a particularly good man and thoroughly familiar with the work. Therefore we are glad he is in that position.

Mr. Wright: I understand some survey parties under P.F.R.A. have been working out of The Pas in Manitoba for the past two