

The Address—Mr. Drew

attended by himself, and the ministers of agriculture of each of the prairie provinces, to see what can be done to meet this situation.

This subject should be discussed from the point of view of dealing with the transportation of grain as an emergency, an emergency just as important to the people in the three western provinces as though this were a situation which might have arisen in a time of war.

Also I think the credit position of the farmers in the three prairie provinces should be examined, and that very quickly arrangements should be made so that those farmers who have been seriously affected this year, and whose credit position is difficult through no fault of their own but because of unusual weather conditions, combined with difficulty in moving the crop, can get credit so that they may make their plans for the next year, and so that their production will be fully maintained.

Furthermore I say that such a conference, frankly and without reserve, should discuss the type of production next year, which is indicated through the known demands throughout the world, and also having regard to any changes of which the government may be aware concerning the consumption of our products in any of our larger markets. In making that statement I have no desire to be an alarmist, but I do not think that any of us should disregard the possibility that the British market may be affected by some of the austerity measures indicated within the past few days. If those measures are going to have an effect upon our markets, then let us know, and let the farmers in western Canada know. That would help them to plan their production on a basis and in a manner that would give them the most effective production next year from the point of view of financial return and certainly of markets.

I recognize there is no procedure by which I can place a motion before the house that will indicate to the minister that members of the House of Commons do want action—and action right away—to deal with this emergency. I would hope however that he has received sufficient indication from members on both sides of the house that they would support immediate and positive action. He may take their expressions as reflecting the views of the people, that this calls for drastic measures, in keeping with the nature of the emergency with which the three prairie provinces are confronted.

I wish now to speak about another subject which, while not directly related to what I have been saying, on the other hand is not entirely unrelated. On different occasions in the house there has been discussion of the

[Mr. Drew.]

South Saskatchewan river project. I raise the subject again because, once more, I have had the opportunity to discuss that project in Saskatchewan. I do wish to raise once again the need for an early decision to proceed with this great venture. On different occasions during the present session, as well as on earlier occasions and in earlier sessions, the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) has emphasized the fact that this is no longer a speculative project, but that the evidence is available upon which to base a decision to proceed with something which should be open no longer to any doubt.

I raise the matter, not only because I have had further opportunity for discussion of this subject while in Saskatchewan, but also because it is referred to in the speech from the throne—and in a way that I think raises a very real question as to what the intention of the government is in this matter. I think many hon. members must have been struck by the fact that two projects which have some similarity are mentioned in the speech from the throne. There is reference in it to the St. Lawrence power and waterway development as well as to the South Saskatchewan power and irrigation project.

It must have been noticeable to hon. members that the St. Lawrence power and waterways project is to be pressed forward—alone, if necessary, but preferably in co-operation with the United States—without the government waiting for the advice of any committee or commission. The government has been able to make up its mind on this matter by examining the evidence of its engineers in the usual way. To me it seems very strange that, while the government is prepared to act in regard to a project very much larger in scope, it appears to be unwilling to act on the advice of the same engineers when they advise that the South Saskatchewan project should be proceeded with. When I say “the same engineers” I am not saying that the individuals are the same. I am speaking of the engineers available to the government, through its engineering service.

Mr. Diefenbaker: And also P.F.R.A.

Mr. Drew: Yes, and also P.F.R.A., as well as the excellent and comprehensive reports which have been prepared by that organization.

I wish every member of the house could see the site of that project. It is a very large development. Nevertheless it is one of the simplest engineering developments awaiting the vigour and initiative of the people of Canada. It is a project that is of importance not only to the people in that