

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act

country, which flow from so doing. I refer to superannuation, and so on. I think that is fair, and besides, it will tend to eliminate—at least I hope it will—the appointment of persons whose interests are not always in the P.F.R.A. but in a political situation. When I was in my constituency last autumn it was reported to me by farmers that they had been asked to produce titles to their properties, and that I had been responsible for certain questions in the house which had made that necessary. Of course that was absolutely and entirely wrong, but the impression was left by that official that I had been endeavouring to do something quite the opposite to what we of this group had been trying to do in the preceding session. Therefore I hope this legislation will result in the appointment of the type of official with respect to P.F.R.A. who will be entirely interested in water conservation.

I believe the P.F.R.A. is really one of the good things that has been done by this parliament for the prairie provinces over the years. I say "this parliament" advisedly, because for a good many years, even before the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was brought into parliament and its administration into existence, water conservation in the prairie provinces had been something which we had been anxious to see undertaken. The officials, engineers, and so on, of the P.F.R.A. organization have done a commendable job in this respect, but, as the minister says, we can now expect that the P.F.R.A. will be permanent; consequently the necessary steps should be taken to ensure that permanency.

As the minister indicated in his remarks, irrigation is one of the projects which will have to receive considerable attention. I think he should do everything he can to retain in the employ of the department the engineers who have been responsible for P.F.R.A. up to the present and who have been working on it. If it is a matter of emolument of office, the government should give consideration to seeing to it that the remuneration of these engineers is such that they will be retained in the service of the government, because, as I say, in my opinion they have done a good job.

A few minutes ago on the orders of the day it occurred to me, following the question of the hon. member for Cape Breton South, that I might ask whether the government had decided to appoint the experts which the minister said he thought would still be necessary to advise the government in order to bring about a final decision by the government on the South Saskatchewan river plan. I have been surprised to find that no final decision has been taken, because the people

[Mr. Coldwell.]

of western Canada have been led to believe over the past few years that everything was settled. Indeed, as early as 1946, on April 27, the Minister of Agriculture spoke at the city hall in Regina, and the *Leader-Post*, which I take it can be regarded as being fairly reliable in its news reports of such meetings, stated:

Mr. Gardiner emphasized that the federal government did not need to wait for suggestions or pressure from municipal governments, municipalities, societies or any other groups before proceeding with its water conservation plan. The dominion government had already mapped out a program, and it was a program involving \$110 million. This would be used largely in providing for the storage of water and partly for the distribution of this where needed. The dominion government thus did not need the endorsement of the South Saskatchewan river development association to begin work on the South Saskatchewan river. It had already decided to go through with it.

Consequently we all thought that a decision had been made. If this article had stood alone, one might perhaps have thought that the newspaper reporter had overemphasized the words of the minister, but on several other occasions he made similar statements. On May 21, 1946, we find there is an article in the *Leader-Post*, being a dispatch by the staff reporter of that paper from Ottawa. It deals with what the minister told the house. I have a distinct recollection of it. I have not looked up the exact words, but they are quoted here. The report reads:

"We are prepared to dig ditches; to make that water available as soon as there is an organization at the other end of the ditch to use the water."

On July 12, 1947, there is a dispatch in the *Leader-Post* from Lethbridge, reading in part as follows:

In this connection Mr. Gardiner pointed out the dominion government had no intention of selling or distributing power. "Our intention is to construct dams and storage reservoirs and connecting canals. When these are completed we will deliver the water in accordance with agreement previously reached."

I understand that discussions have taken place recently with the government of Saskatchewan as a result of which a tentative agreement has been made as to apportionment of the costs, and that the minister has received confirmation in writing of the tentative understanding to assume its share of the costs stated from the province of Saskatchewan.

In view of the statements that have been made over the years as to this project, we are most anxious to see construction of the dam begun immediately in order that the irrigation project may be proceeded with. This is not a new subject of discussion in the house. Hon. members who have been here for many years have heard it discussed again and again.