

*Prairie Farm Assistance Act*

suppose there is any likelihood of getting those cheques in before late next year. By that time we hope that the rehabilitation will have been completed. I think we should keep the two things separate and not confuse them. As I said, one thing is an act under which, if we qualify, we get payment the same as everybody else, irrespective of the cause. The cause may be flood in Manitoba. It may be drought. It will be drought in many parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta, because every year there are some parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta which get benefits under the act. I do not therefore see why the question should be brought in that there will be a deduction.

Some hon. members said that it did not make much difference whether the relief came from P. F. A. A. or whether it came directly from the treasury. I contend that there is a big difference between the two. As I said, one we are entitled to and we get. We are not asking—at least I am not—or advocating any special treatment under the act. What I want to make sure of is that we get what is coming to us. The other thing is an entirely different question, and I do not propose to go into it at this time. I refer to the money which will be contributed to the province by the federal government on a percentage basis.

So far as this amendment is concerned, I agree with the minister that the underlying principle is a good one. However, I repeat that in Manitoba we have had very minor benefits from the Prairie Farm Assistance Act over the years since its inception. So far in committee exceptions have been made to take care of particular situations in Saskatchewan and Alberta. We have proceeded more or less on the assumption that this amendment would not affect Manitoba. It is quite likely that it may not affect Manitoba; I do not know for sure. Apparently we have no way of finding out what effect it will have on Manitoba. I should like to put in the reservation that if it does cut down further the benefits that have been coming to Manitoba it may well cut them to such an extent that the usefulness of the act may almost disappear in that province.

The minister has given us the assurance that he wants to give this amendment a trial. That is quite agreeable to Manitobans as a whole. I am quite sure that we should give it a trial, and in that way we shall find out whether it affects our province or not. As I say, with the principle of the amendment I am in agreement. I think it is a good one, and we are prepared to see it tried out at least for the coming year.

**Mr. Wright:** There appears to be agreement on all sides as to the desirability of withdrawing submarginal land in certain areas in the south of the province from participation under this act. In my opinion, though, the best way to accomplish this is to spend a little more money under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act. During the early years when the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was in operation large numbers of settlers were moved from dried-out areas in the south of the province to better farming areas within Alberta, Saskatchewan particularly, and in some instances Manitoba.

I should like to get some information from the minister, if he has it, with respect to the number of settlers who were assisted under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act to move out of these marginal areas into other areas during the years before the war. As a matter of fact it seemed to me that very few moved. I do not think any were given assistance during the war years to move to other areas. Since the war the movement of those settlers from the southern areas into the northern areas of the prairie provinces has not again started. In my opinion that is the only way in which we can meet the problem of reducing the payments under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. The way to do it is to see that the settlers in those areas who took up land forty or fifty years ago, and some since that time, are given opportunity to move into better farming areas, either areas in which irrigation projects are being developed, or areas in the northern part of the province where we are not subject to drought and where land is still available.

There has been difficulty, I know. There has been a shortage of land in the northern areas of the provinces. Large areas in the northern parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan particularly were held in forest reserves until the timber had been cut. In a great many instances most of the valuable timber has been removed from those areas, and the land is now being opened for agricultural settlement.

As I said before, the best way to solve our problem with respect to reducing the Prairie Farm Assistance Act payments in the southern portions of Alberta and Saskatchewan is to see that these settlers are assisted in moving into better farming areas, either the irrigation areas or the northern areas which are not affected by drought.

Can the minister give the committee the numbers that were moved or assisted to move during those years into other parts, particularly in the two or three years prior to the war and since the war, if that movement has been started again? I mean assisted by the federal government through the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act since the war.