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Our Ottawa Letter

\$700,000 for Aid to Agriculture-Plan to Build Better Roads-Closure Rules Established

(By The Guide Special Correspondent.)

Ottawa, April 26.—With highly con-troversial discussion of two politico-economic questions of supreme interest to the farmers of the country, and the adoption of rules by the House which will limit debate at the will of the government, this was not the least interesting ment, this was not the least interesting week since the session began. Hon, Martin Burrell, minister of agriculture, introduced his Aid to Agriculture Bill on Friday of last, week. The bill provides for the appropriation of \$19,000,000 for aid to agriculture, the money to be ex-pended by the Federal government pended by the Federal government throughout a period extending over ten years. The money is to be expended along lines particularly and soundly interpretative of agricultural education. In other words, it is to be expended with the consent of, and by agreement with the various provinces, the advice of the latter as to the best means by which aid can be granted to be acted upon by the can be granted to be acted upon by the Federal government. It will largely include the carrying of greater agri-cultural knowledge and practices to new settlers and general research work. Aid will also likely be given to provincial demonstration farms. The money is to be granted to the various provinces upon the usual provincial subsidy basis according to the least a least the least th ing to the latest decennial census figures. Seven hundred thousand dollars will be divided among the nine provinces this year and this amount will be increased to a million dollars for next and the

succeeding eight years. The opposition, while not disagreeing with the principle underlying the bill, criticised some of its details. Western members, including Dr. Clark, of Red Deer, and W. M. Martin, of Regina, said that it would have been better to have placed the various amounts to be granted in the estimates each year rather than to have them dealt with in a statutory way. They argued that if the amounts were put in the estimates the provinces would be assured just as much as though one sum was placed in the bill. A permanent policy was not desirable. They also thought that the government should be made more responsible for the manner and method in which the money is to be expended rather than have the provinces take full responsibility. Dr. Clark also took occasion to point out to the government that the greatest need of the Western farmer at the present time was not technical agricultural education looking for the increase of production, but rather a government policy which would permit of the disposal of present day production. He was opposed to the principle of voting money for a period of ten years in advance. He believed that in the handling of public money, it was the duty of Parliament to retain control over it. This attitude was also taken by the majority of the members of the opposition who spoke. They did not think that the government had a right to attempt to bind their successors in such a manner as was proposed in the

Favor Provincial Administration

Hon. Martin Burrell replied to the criticisms in detail. Answering the criticism that it would have been better to place sums in the estimates from time to time as required, Mr. Burrell contended that the provinces were not favorable to this method, but preferred a policy of continuity. There was no use in introducing any line of policy unless the provinces could bank on its being a continuous policy, and could shape their plans knowing approximately what the Federal government would do in the future. To the contention that the Federal government should have greater control over the expenditure of the money, Mr. Burrell said that it was important that the provinces should deal with the money by means of their own machinery, and in their own way, because they knew best what their own conditions were. He believed that it would be better and more practicable to have the provinces take responsibility for this, than if the Federal government were to try to thresh out definite propositions affecting particular localities and local conditions on the floor of the House. To the argument that there was no policy in the bill, the minister replied that though it contained

no absolute policy, there was a broad outline of program, that all money should be devoted to agricultural education, instruction and demonstration. It was not possible for a government, dealing with nine provincial ministries, to lay down absolutely explicit lines along which each province could best move in studying its own conditions. The only way the Federal government could proceed was to consult year by year with the pro-vincial governments and educational authorities for the purpose of reaching a reasonable line of action which would make for continuity and development of agricultural education.

Building Good Roads

On Monday Hon. Frank Cochrane introduced his Improvement of Highways Bill. This bill is practically the same as the one which the government intro-duced near the close of last session and which was amended in such a way by the Senate as led the government to refuse to accept it in its altered form. The bill simply provides that the Federal government shall from time to time expend certain amounts as are deemed advisable in the construction and maintenance of highways in the various provinces, the expenditures to be made with the consent of the respective provincial governments. The same criticism which led to the amending of the bill by the Senate last year was again made by the opposition this week. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, while declaring that there was no point of difference between the opposition and the govern-ment as to the merits and usefulness of the main principle of the bill, was opposed to the method of apportionment proposed. He contended for the inclusion in the bill of a clause for the application or expenditure of the money on the same basis as provincial subsidies. He did not think that the distribution of the money should be left absolutely to the discretion of the minister of railways or the government. "I do not," he said, "dispute the good intention of the minister of railways, but he must know that if we have laws it is because we are human and because we cannot trust the good intentions of human beings. It is much better to have a principle incorporated in a law than to leave it merely to be understood. As the bill is now drafted there is no rule at all in it to guide the government as to the expenditure of the money and the minister can expend it in one way or another just as he pleases. It would be in his power to give to Ontario and to refuse to Quebec or to give to Quebec and refuse to Ontario." At the conclusion of his speech Sir Wilfrid moved the following amendment:
"That the bill be not now read the

second time, but that it be resolved that this House, while recognizing the importance of assisting out of the Federal treasury in the matter of highways, is of the opinion that all appropriations for that object should be allotted and paid to the governments of the respective provinces in proportion to the population of said provinces respectively as de-termined by the latest decennial census."

Premier Promises Safeguards

Premier Borden, replying to Sir Wilfrid argued that the amendment of the leader of the opposition was superfluous, as there was absolutely no provision whatever in the bill for the spending of any sum of money except such as might-from time to time be voted by Parliament. The bill of itself, he said, does not enable the government or the minister of railways to expend one single dollar unless that dollar shall have been first voted by Parliament. This bill will place at the disposal of the provinces, under proper safeguards which will be devised and agreed upon between the several provinces and the Federal government, a sum of money for each province to bring about better communication between farm and factory and between every part of the country and the great transportation lines. He promised that all monies voted would be divided among the provinces upon the usual basis of population. No money could be expended without the authority of the provincial governments and, therefore, provincial rights were not infringed

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