

applications from farmers living outside that area, not only from Saskatchewan and Alberta, but from Manitoba as well. The province of Manitoba is looking after farmers who own their land and had no crop last year. I also understand that the Government of Saskatchewan some years ago passed a Municipal Seed Grain Act by means of which municipalities were empowered to advance seed grain to needy farmers. It is stated that municipalities and private individuals cannot get any credit from the banks this year. That may be true, particularly as regards private individuals. Applications for assistance have come in from Manitoba, perhaps in consequence of the difficulty of getting credit, but my reply has invariably been that the intention of the Government is to assist only the farmers of the drouth-stricken area. It was never intended to distribute seed grain promiscuously. If we had done that farmers who had had a good crop would have been applying to the Government for a loan at a cheap rate of interest. We should have been flooded with applications.

Manitoba has had for years a law empowering municipalities to advance seed grain to needy settlers within the municipal bounds. That Act is to be enlarged this year, so the papers say, so

3 p.m. that not only will the municipalities be able to make such advances, but the Provincial Government will get behind the municipalities and advance the money. We feel that Manitoba is acting wisely. The Provincial Government there is looking after its own people, and our efforts are confined to the homesteaders between the two lakes where a number of people are located who have not yet patents for their land. Up to the 25th of January we had received some 6,000 applications from people who reside outside the drouth-stricken area, and I am informed that many of these have done just as the hon. member for Regina says: taking advantage of the high prices they sold their grain, and now are applying to the Government to supply them with seed grain. Just to get a little ready money they sold their grain. It matters not whether they had a poor crop or not. Undoubtedly some of the farmers applying for assistance had fair crops, some of them very good crops. Some who have applied for seed have frankly stated that they had as much as 1,500 acres of land prepared for seed. Fancy the owner of three sec-

tions being unable to finance the seed for that land! I cannot believe it myself. I know that the banks have been very cautious in the past in advancing farmers money for that purpose, but I also know that my colleague the Finance Minister has been in touch with the head offices of our Canadian banks. He asked them to loosen up, to let the farmers have more credit. As a result of this intercession by the Finance Minister, the presidents of our Canadian banks instructed their western branch managers to meet all legitimate demands. The head offices in the East state they are quite willing to advance money on fair security.

Then, as to the delay in coming to a decision how far this relief should be extended. I may say, in the first place, that I have had an interview with Hon. George Bell, provincial treasurer for the province of Saskatchewan, as to the security we should receive for any advances we might make. We expected advances on patented lands to be secured in the same way that the Provincial Government was secured by their legislation of 1908. In justice to the Provincial Governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan, I must say that they have given us their written consent to give our lien, in the case of such advances, priority over all other existing encumbrances.

Mr. W. M. MARTIN: Do I understand that the position taken by the Dominion Government was that they should have a first lien upon patented lands, with priority over all existing encumbrances and mortgages, for the amount of seed grain supplied to each farmer?

Mr. ROCHE: That is the position. That was the position of the Provincial Government in 1908. I have in my possession letters and telegrams received from the Provincial Governments. I might as well read one I received from the Premier of Alberta last evening. We sent out an agreement to be signed by the respective governments asking not only for preferential legislation in favor of our liens for our seed grain advancement, but also to include the relief which we had been giving destitute settlers. Mr. Sifton replies:

Agreement received; provision as to payment of expenses satisfactory; perfectly satisfactory as to seed grain. If words 'relief other than seed grain' confined to feed for horses putting in crop, that also will be satisfactory.

I do not know whether the hon. member