

We are all the more interested in the prosperity of the west that, in addition to the thousands of families who left Quebec to settle there, we now find hundreds of thousands of Quebec families in the prairies where they are determined to live while they are hoping and still trusting today that their linguistic rights will be recognized. While all western premiers have unanimously rejected the idea of an economic association with Quebec, as reported in a newspaper recently, I am convinced they will gladly accept Quebec money for help. And we from Quebec are indeed very happy to respond to the appeal of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) by helping them through our tax dollars or otherwise. Besides, on rereading our history, we will find that Quebec is the only province which has given of itself unstintingly to Confederation for over 100 years. It is an appeal, made in a brotherly spirit, to the provinces to share for national unity which is threatened today.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The nature of the statement appears to be such that questioning that is usually permitted, if it is to take place, will not be very extensive. I know that the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) has a question or two following his remarks. I do not know if other members have questions. I do not have that impression. The schedule is running out. If it is just the hon. member for Medicine Hat, it might be to the convenience of members and more orderly, in the conduct of our business, to allow him to put his questions now and attempt to conclude routine proceedings before we break for lunch. I will attempt to do that, if hon. members are agreed.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Hargrave: Mr. Speaker, I have two very short questions that I would like to address to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). First, I can only assume that the principal agency for the drought co-ordination would be the PFRA. That is probably the reason for the headquarters of the program being in Regina. If possible, I would like to have confirmation of that, and whether they are going to be, shall we say, turned loose as a technical arm of the federal government on this program. Second, would the minister care to enlarge on the intriguing term "supply" with respect to the stream-flow in the west?

● (1300)

Mr. Whelan: To answer the first question first, PFRA will be very much involved in this. They have the expertise; their people have a tremendous amount of knowledge in this field. But they will be working very closely with staff of the Department of the Environment who have prepared all the maps and who know where all the groundwater is in western Canada, the good water, the bad water, and so on.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) asked about these maps. I hope I did not give the impression they were secret. We intend to make them available to members so they can see the tremendous amount of work which has been done by the various departments in putting these things to-

Drought Conditions

gether. I am not overestimating the number of hours which have been spent by our officials in preparing this material for many weeks now. If I could have done so, I would have arranged that these maps could have been put on display today. When we talk about streamflow, what we are discussing is water which moves from one city to another—that type of thing. We shall be asking cities whose waterflow has decreased tremendously to use it with the caution which is to be expected.

Severe regulations may have to be introduced in some areas to make sure that water is properly shared. This is one of the things we mean by proper streamflow. There are agreements between the provinces, but we must make sure that these agreements work—that one section does not take all the water while another, downstream, is left without water. As to the wells system, I believe the Minister of the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) explained that aspect in the House the other day in response to the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker).

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, my question has been partly answered by the minister's response to the hon. member for Medicine Hat. But I should like to hear the minister reaffirm that the PFRA, with its long record of activity in the western provinces, will play a leading role in this effort, rather than the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, a department which has other responsibilities in the prairies in which it is involved. I hope the minister will reaffirm the role which the director of PFRA and the entire agency will play in this ongoing program.

Mr. Speaker: Before the minister answers, I gather the hon. member for Brandon-Souris wishes to put a brief question as well. Perhaps he would do so now.

Mr. Dinsdale: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The southwest corner of Manitoba is deeply involved in this situation because the economy of the farm community and of the small business community is closely integrated. Could the minister be more specific in indicating whether his contingency plans extend to the small business community and those in the service industries which serve the agricultural community? For example, will the Minister of State for Small Business be involved in the committee deliberations?

Mr. Whelan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) spoke about the small business communities. This is one area which will receive priority. Some of these communities will be in dire need. In fact, they are in dire need at the present time. Reservoirs are low. The Minister of State for Small Business will be on the committee, and this will be regarded as an important aspect of the program because we realize the need to keep these people in business so that they can stay in the community. We believe that by co-ordinating all these efforts, the work of the PFRA, the environmental specialists and even the Department of National Defence—we have certain equipment they could use if circumstances warrant—will be strengthened. We are pre-