

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

are taking up land of that kind or whether their circumstances are better after they have taken up the land.

Mr. Argue: Of course that is the very thing the minister will not be checking, because he is not taking in railway lands or Hudson's Bay land. I am all for checking the submarginal land. Within those townships in which payment has been made for nine years or so, there is bound to be a good deal of submarginal land.

Mr. Ross (Souris): Ten years in some cases.

Mr. Argue: Yes, ten years in some cases. But even in those townships there can be land that is good wheat land and that is supermarginal, according to the economic surveys, just the same as you can go into a township in which there has never been any payment made under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, and yet you may still find some submarginal land which is being used for wheat production. The only thing is that in one township it is a large percentage of the land and therefore shows up in the average yield; and in another it is a small percentage of the land and therefore does not show up in the average yield.

I want to make it perfectly clear that I am for the veterans preference at all times; but I would point out that any preference that is being given to veterans under this new clause is a preference which is given only because other people had a preference taken away from them. It is not an additional preference for veterans. You say: As to veterans, we will not touch them, but we will go after some of the others.

Mr. Gardiner: That is not correct.

Mr. Argue: I would not want the impression left that it gives all veterans farming on crown land a preference, because it does not. It gives a preference only to veterans who have taken up land under the Veterans Land Act. I see that the Minister of Veterans Affairs is here, and I think he will agree with me when I say that in the larger part of western Canada a half section of land is not an economic unit for a veteran, a civilian or anyone else. The Saskatchewan government believe that, as I am sure do other provincial governments. What the Saskatchewan government is doing in a great many cases is taking veterans who have obtained provincial lands under the Veterans Land Act and then saying to them: If there is another quarter of crown land available for you in the immediate vicinity and you make an application for that land, we will give you a preference. If that veteran has three quarters of crown land, two quarters of which he has

[Mr. Gardiner.]

obtained under the Veterans Land Act and the other quarter he has obtained only because he made application to the Saskatchewan department of agriculture and obtained a veterans preference, then he will not receive prairie farm assistance on the additional quarter. While there is a veterans preference, it does not go all the way for all veterans on all land they may farm.

Mr. Juras: In view of certain statements that were made with regard to the act as related to the flood area, I should like to revert to that subject for a minute or so. I do not intend to go over the discussion we had in the committee on that section. I want to make it clear, however, that when I raised the question in the committee it was purely for the purpose of getting clarification of the regulations in view of a particular circumstance that may affect the Red river valley this year. I pointed out that this situation existed in the past in other areas. I quite agree with the Minister of Agriculture that we should not look for special relief treatment under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. In this regard I would disagree, as a matter of fact, with the hon member for Assiniboia, who suggested that we should in some way evolve a special method of getting relief assistance through the P. F. A. A.

When I raised the question my intention, as I said, was purely to get clarification. In other words, there is an act that provides assistance when there is a crop failure. There is a possibility that there might be, for once, a crop failure in my district. My intention was to find out if we would get our due. I was merely trying to get the regulations clarified in order to make sure that we would get what was coming to us. It was on that basis that I went into this matter.

In view of the statement made by the minister today, I am afraid that I shall have to say that I respectfully disagree with the second part of it, to the effect that assistance through the P. F. A. A. is in a way similar to relief assistance that might be given by the government. The P. F. A. A. is a statute, and therefore if the district meets the conditions of the act, we are entitled to payment under the act; and as such we are entitled as of right under the act. Consequently the share of the relief assistance that will be assumed by the federal government is in an entirely different category.

As a matter of fact, from the practical point of view if we are paid any money under this act, I do not think it will be deducted from the relief fund, because I would hope that any relief money will be paid long before any cheques under P. F. A. A. are received. If there is a crop failure, I do not