

Western Canada grain harvest; assistance by the  
armed forces

27. The Minister of Agriculture reported that a critical situation was developing for the grain harvest in western Canada. In Saskatchewan only some 10 percent of the crop had been threshed and only a small proportion had been cut. In Alberta the same situation prevailed. It was somewhat better in Manitoba. It was not normally possible to harvest after October 31st. Unless there was good weather and quick action to cut and thresh between now and that date a large amount of the grain might remain unharvested. To provide all possible assistance, it would be desirable if some arrangement could be made to secure men from the armed forces as was done during the war.

28. The Minister of National Defence said that in the war-time arrangements federal and provincial governments had shared the costs of transportation, including meals and sleeping accommodation for men provided. Farmers to whom assistance was afforded paid the going rate in the community for men employed. If assistance were given, men to be provided would be in three categories: men who volunteered to use part of their annual leave for the harvest; units sent as such; and men allowed to volunteer for such work apart from their annual leave. As an immediate measure, orders had been dispatched to officers in command directing that fourteen days of special harvest leave be provided for men in units other than the 27th Brigade Group to enable them to assist members of their families in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The orders had instructed that return transportation, berths and meal tickets be provided, that provisions of the Defence Services Pension Act would be extended to cover harvest work and that arrangements with regard to remuneration should be worked out between the individuals taking leave and the persons for whom they worked. Pay and allowances would be provided during the period of leave. If it appeared during the next week that men were urgently required at particular points, special measures could be taken.

The provinces should pay at least half the costs of transportation, berths and meals. They should also take action to see that manpower available in western towns and cities was used.

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