

had nothing to do with land that had already been patented, and that the subject came under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Government. The Provincial Government rather reluctantly submitted to that decision, and undertook the distribution of seed grain to those who were the owners of those lands. It was done in this way: the Dominion Government loaned Saskatchewan and Alberta, at 5 per cent, the money necessary to supply seed for the farmers residing on patented lands. The system adopted in the two provinces differed. The province of Saskatchewan took a lien against the land, and passed legislation at the following session of the legislature by which that lien was given priority over any existing mortgages. The Provincial Government alone could do this, the Dominion could not. As a result of that legislation, I understand, they took a lien, not only upon the land, which would be a first lien, but also upon the crops and upon any other personal property of the person owning the land. But in Alberta not only did they do that, but they levied and collected the money by way of taxes, with the result that up to about the first of this year the province of Alberta had repaid the Dominion all but about \$3,000 of what they had borrowed for that purpose. It seems to be the best manner in which they could possibly collect money by taxation. To be sure, Alberta had not borrowed nearly the amount that Saskatchewan had. The province of Saskatchewan, on the other hand, had not undertaken to collect it by way of taxes, and I think, as a matter of fact, the practice was that they have collected only when there was a transfer of land, with the result that at the first of this year Saskatchewan, out of the advances we made to them—I think it was in the neighbourhood of \$1,000,000—still owes us between \$300,000 and \$400,000.

Their method of collecting was therefore not nearly so effective as that of the province of Alberta. I perfectly understand the position. It is only natural that the Government should not want to be put in the position of a landlord; for many people thinking that the Government would not be harsh in its method of collection would take advantage of it. This has actually been done. The result is that these delinquents have not paid to the province of Saskatchewan, and the province of Saskatchewan has not paid to us, the moneys we advanced in 1903, nearly seven years ago.

The hon. gentleman has referred to a conference held last summer between some

[Mr. Roche.]

members of this Government and representatives of the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan. I first heard of this conference in the latter part of December, and therefore cannot vouch for what took place there. But I understand that the Provincial Government made the proposal that they would look after both homesteaders and non-homesteaders, and give them relief in the shape of road work. They drew up a plan under which a single man would receive about \$60, and a married man about \$100. They did not limit this assistance to those who were not owners of their lands. Assistance was to be given to both owners and non-owners, but was confined entirely to those in the drouth-stricken area. There is *prima facie* evidence that the conference referred to the drouth-stricken area only, and I am informed that that was what my colleagues had in mind when they entered into this arrangement with the Provincial Government. The Government of Saskatchewan had in mind at that time the farmers of the drouth-stricken area only. My information is that this area was set aside after consultation with the Mounted Police and members of the Provincial Government. Our assistance has been given mainly to the farmers of that area because we were informed that they had practically no crops whatever, though undoubtedly odd farmers here and there have had fair crops.

It is true that a great many applications have been made to the Government since then outside of that area. Perhaps the farmers were prompted to ask for assistance by certain articles in the press. It may be that Mr. Walker's letter of October last was not as definite as it should have been. The hon. member for Regina (Mr. Martin) interpreted it to mean any farmer could get seed grain from the Government, whether the owner of his land or not, and whether within or without the drouth-stricken area. That, I maintain, was not the idea in Mr. Walker's mind when he wrote the letter. I admit that his letter did not specifically mention that the assistance was to be confined to the farmers in the drouth-stricken area, but on the other hand it did not say that assistance would be given to those outside that particular area; and since our assistance has been practically confined to the farmers within that area, I think it is only fair to assume that it was those in that area only who were to be assisted. I know that there have been