

powers as are involved in a matter of this kind should not be given to one individual by order in council.

May I also point out that, notwithstanding the difficult plight of agriculture from coast to coast, the agriculture committee of this house has not met once during the last two sessions of parliament. It is hard to understand why that committee has not been called together to discuss the serious condition of agriculture, about which the government professes to be so much concerned.

Under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act the Minister of Agriculture is almost a dictator, but only farmers producing under twelve bushels an acre have come under his rule. Under this new scheme all the farmers of the prairie provinces will come under his dictate. I am certainly of opinion that this authority should not be given one who enjoys the reputation of a great partisan administrator. As some evidence of what may happen, let me quote from the report of the auditor general for the period ended March 31, 1940. Referring to the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, he states on page 61—to cite just one case—Commitments of approximately \$1,315,575.20 were incurred in excess of the amount appropriated without certificates of the comptroller of the treasury being secured in the manner provided for by sections 26 and 29 of the Consolidated Revenue and Audit Act, 1931. These overcommitments, by group classifications, are made up of: land utilization, \$22,036.47; water development, small projects, \$909,553.00, large projects \$384,185.73.

By an amendment to the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (chap. 7 assented to 5th April, 1939), the minister may, subject to the approval of the governor in council, enter into agreements with provinces, cities, towns, persons, etc., for projects or schemes for the conservation of water. Payments during the year were made in several cases on ministerial authority only. . . .

The report goes on to quote examples. I would point out that this was taking place during the latter part of 1939—not so many months prior to the general election of March, 1940.

Turning to page 66, we find, with reference to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act:

Regulations made under the act and approved by order in council dated November 23, 1939 (P.C. 3820) provided for the establishment of a committee of review, the duties of the committee to be to examine data, to review yield categories, to consider applications open to question and to report its findings to the Minister of Agriculture. Under the statute before it was amended in 1940, the determining of the acreage yield, which formed the basis of acreage awards, rested with the Minister of Agriculture and the law officers expressed their opinion that the non-concurrence of the committee did not preclude the minister from awarding assistance. Several awards were made by the minister covering yields not accepted by the committee.

Farmers were not required to make applications for assistance. While section 5 of the act gives the power to make regulations to require farmers to furnish information and section 11 makes it an offence if any person falsely claims assistance, the farmers filed only acreage reports and the value of the certification to these reports was often negated by changes unsigned by the farmers.

There are many other similar references on these pages, all illustrating the great extent of the authority which is vested in one minister under regulations brought in as these have been. I am very much of the opinion that there should be a minimum clause in these regulations in order to protect the small producers. It was pointed out by one of the previous speakers that the average number of acres of wheat produced by the farmers is fifty. Throughout a large part of Manitoba a minimum of eighty acres would not be too much for the farmers, and I do not think any farmer should be compelled to reduce below that acreage. There should also be some restrictions on the large farmers with an opportunity to cash in on this scheme. Moreover, when this scheme was being considered by the government, the Minister of Agriculture, I believe, invited the provincial departments of agriculture and municipal officials to Ottawa. They were amazed to read on the train, coming to Ottawa, the announcement of the policy before they had been consulted.

The three provincial governments have taken the stand that the initial payment on wheat should be at least 85 cents. The western union of municipalities, after due consideration, recommended that the payment should be 95 cents a bushel on this quota basis, and I believe the quota they advocated was approximately that which has been arrived at.

The Sirois commission in their report point out that from 1896 to 1913, under a vigorous immigration policy carried out by the government of that day, assisted by the railways and the real estate companies, a vast expansion took place in western Canada, and land ranging from 10,000,000 acres to 70,000,000 acres was settled, with the result that wheat acreage expanded accordingly. The officials under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act contend that there has been conducted throughout a considerable part of that area a soils survey by the soils experts of the three provincial governments, and they suggest that 6,000,000 acres of land should be taken out of grain production. Some headway has been made in this direction. A large part of that land lies within the boundaries of Saskatchewan. The statement is often made that, from patriotic