

The prolonged drought period of the 1930's in Western Canada, coupled with generally depressed economic conditions, brought the Department of Agriculture into the fields of marketing legislation, assistance and rehabilitation programs. The Natural Products Marketing Act, passed in 1934, provided for the establishment of a Dominion Marketing Board. The object of the Act was to improve the methods and practices of marketing natural products in domestic and export trade. In 1936, the Act was declared *ultra vires* by the Supreme Court of Canada and the decision was upheld in 1937 by the Imperial Privy Council. The Government then decided to assist orderly marketing by the encouragement of pools which would return to the producer the maximum sales return for his product, less a maximum margin for handling expenses agreed upon in advance.

In 1935, with the passage of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, the Department moved to the relief of prairie agriculture. The three major purposes of the Act were: to develop tillage and cropping practices that would enable farmers to farm successfully under a wide and fluctuating range of physical and economic hazards; to divert crop production from poor land and to use such land for grazing; and to make better use of the limited water resources of the prairie area. In succeeding years the developments under the program of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act did much to change the farming pattern over a large part of Western Canada. So valuable have been the results of this program that it has been retained and extended over an increasingly large part of the country. The magnitude of the undertakings stemming from this legislation is indicated by the fact that \$76,500,000 has been spent on it since its inception.

In 1937, the organization of the Department of Agriculture was changed and its activities grouped into services on a functional basis. Activities relating to production were included in one service, those relating to marketing in another, and the research activities in the natural sciences were grouped together in a third. The Experimental Farms organization, aside from the units concerned with botany, chemistry and bacteriology, comprised the fourth major service.

In 1939, the Wheat Co-operative Marketing Act and the Agricultural Products Co-operative Marketing Act were passed. The Wheat Co-operative Marketing Act was used for only one year after which most problems connected with the marketing of wheat were handled by the Department of Trade and Commerce under the Canadian Wheat Board Act. The Agricultural Products Co-operative Marketing Act, which covers the marketing of all agricultural products other than wheat, has been used to a considerable degree. Its purpose is to aid farmers in pooling returns from the sale of their products by guaranteeing initial payments and thus assisting in the orderly marketing of the product. Sales returns are made to producers on a co-operative plan.

In order to provide a measure of assistance for farmers who might suffer from low yields because of factors beyond their control, the Prairie Farm Assistance Act was passed in 1939. When the average yields in designated areas fall below certain figures, direct money payments are made to farmers within the area. A 1-p.c. levy on all western grain marketed in Canada provides some of the funds from which assistance payments are made. Up to Mar. 31, 1953, \$143,327,607 had been paid out to farmers and the total levy collected was \$69,832,427.