

Supply—Agriculture

Mention has been made of the family farm. I indicated earlier my opinion that an efficient family farm is not a farm of 18 acres with a couple of cows, a couple of laying hens, a couple of acres of wheat and a couple of sows. I support the efficient family farm, but this government is doing nothing whatever to support such a farm when it introduces legislation which would support a farm which would have 500 laying hens. The minister knows enough about modern agriculture to realize that an economic family farm unit is not constituted by 500 laying hens. If he limits his guarantees to that, all he is doing is subsidizing the inefficient agricultural producers of Canada and helping to prolong the agony of such farm families. We maintain that the efficient family farm should be a farm unit where husband, wife and family are able to recover their cash outlay plus a reasonable percentage of their investment and, in addition, receive an income on a par with that of the ordinary Canadian citizen. This cannot be accomplished by a policy of curtailing production, and I hope the minister will not follow the example of his predecessor who used to march around the country telling farmers: if you want a fair price you have to produce less. The former minister of agriculture was as ill-advised then as he is now in his new role as an advocate of nuclear weapons. The conception of restricting production in order to maintain prices is an outmoded capitalistic idea which even capitalists will no longer buy. However, the Minister of National Defence, when he was minister of agriculture, bought that concept. What an inhuman and unrealistic attitude that is, and what a typically Tory attitude it represents. The present Minister of Agriculture, unlike his predecessor, is a native of Saskatchewan and I know he has a little bit of the progressive in him. The words "Progressive Conservative" are not entirely inapplicable to him, and I hope he will not pursue the policy of his predecessor and advise all kinds of organizations across the nation that if they want a fair and equitable deal they must produce less, create scarcity, and thereby obtain better returns per unit.

I was very interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Peace River. I should like to remind him that the wheat growers of Canada are organized. Even though I sometimes may have to disagree with what they advocate, they have come a long way over many long years. They have made sacrifices, and other branches of Canadian agriculture have not even begun to realize the potentialities of organization. I hope the minister will supply some leadership to these other branches of agriculture in order to help them to help themselves to get a fair deal. We have

[Mr. Regier.]

often heard of lobbying legislators. I know of no group in all Canadian history, outside the investment dealers, the Canadian chamber of commerce and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, who have lobbied more effectively in this House of Commons than have the wheat growers of Canada. I should like to see the day when the onion growers, the potato growers, the tomato growers and the poultry farmers are organized to the point when they can make their unified voices heard, and I hope, as I said, that the minister will supply some leadership so as to enable these people, who together outnumber the wheat growers by far, to obtain equity on the national scene.

Much has been made in speeches of the minister's "trees galore" plan. I admire the plan. I think it is wonderful. I think it is good. However, it will do very little to help the farmers of Canada in either the minister's lifetime or my own. This is a long range program which the minister is advocating and there are matters of much greater urgency to be attended to now.

The hon. member for Moose Mountain had some good words to say about the minister but his words of praise also included the minister's parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Provencher and that, I think, was an error. The hon. member for Provencher, as I understand it, is in favour of the factory farm. We in this group and I think I can speak for my colleagues—are in favour of the family farm as opposed to the factory farm.

The hon. member also mentioned the problem of unemployment insurance for farm workers. I agree that they should be covered by unemployment insurance. However, what is basically needed is to give to the farmers an adequate income so that they can afford to pay a proper wage to their help. If they can pay an adequate wage they will be able to get the help. I realize the farmer is unable to do so because he does not get fair treatment. He is unable to pay the wages that industrial firms are able to pay, and therefore very often is unable to get the help he needs. Unemployment insurance will not provide the answer even though it ought to be introduced and made applicable to farm workers. But that is not the real problem; the real problem is to give the farmer enough net income so that he can pay his employees a wage which would make the position attractive and the wages comparable to those which are paid in industry today.

Mr. Pitman: Before the item carries I would like to ask the minister a question. Is the federal government planning to introduce legislation which will permit the federal government to co-operate with the provinces to