

Supply—Agriculture

This does not apply only to my area. In the province of Manitoba there are areas which are producing almost half the requirements of that province. I can remember as a young lad that in northern Ontario we were producing mangolds and sugar beets, and it seemed there were miles and miles of rows that had to be hoed by hand. These were large sugar beets, as I remember, and I am sure that most parts of Ontario and Quebec are suitable for the production of this commodity. It is a very simple matter. This is not something for which you have to plan, like beef cattle, where it takes three or four years to get into the field and costs a very large amount of money. All you would have to do in this connection is be assured of a market. Every farmer could plant sugar beet seed and be in production almost overnight. I am also informed that the facilities necessary to convert this commodity for the raw sugar industry do not constitute an expensive proposition. What does the minister say about it? So far he has been silent. Here he has an opportunity to do something in this connection with a very simple subsidy and a guaranteed floor price for sugar beets. He can provide a set price for sugar for every housewife in Canada. He would be the darling of every Canadian housewife and every Canadian mother. When the housewife went to the store, she would find that sugar was the same price this month as it was last month, and it would be the same price in the months to come. The minister can provide this guaranteed price for sugar with the very simple expedient of determining now a policy in this connection. I think this is all the country asks in agriculture namely that we provide leadership.

I was approached not long ago by the cheese producers.

An hon. Member: How wonderful.

Mr. Peters: Well, Mr. Chairman, there is a backbencher over there who does not say much when standing up, but sometimes makes an odd comment—and they are always odd. I had a very interesting talk with the officials of the Ontario cheese producers association. I am not going to outline the mechanics of the plan they proposed, but they are of the opinion that a 1 cent subsidy this year will solve many of the problems in both the domestic and export cheese markets. Hon. members may be aware that the Ontario cheese producers were able to sell last year almost 10 million pounds more cheese than they did the year before; and they were able to absorb this through their marketing agency. They expect this to be increased this year, if they are lucky and other aspects of the dairy

[Mr. Peters.]

industry remain the same. If this is the case, they will have an increase in their sales volume.

The Chairman: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. Shall the resolution carry?

Mr. Howard: Mr. Chairman, would you mind a member from an area that is highly dependant upon fish and fisheries products making a comment or two about agricultural matters? While the city of Prince Rupert is perhaps considered to be the salmon and halibut capital of the world, it is also vitally interested in grain and in the shipment of grain for export, because we have there one of the terminal elevators of the Canadian government. I should like to make a comment or two about this matter and hope that before this item passes the minister will indicate to the committee what the government intends to do and will give us information which is a little more expansive than he has given to the house so far with regard to this grain elevator. I have asked the minister on a number of occasions about this. I have asked questions on the orders of the day about it, and the answer I get on each occasion is that the matter is under consideration. This has been going on for some weeks now—in fact, ever since the house reconvened. We would like to know at least whether the minister is getting near the end of his period of consideration and whether he is in a position to make some announcement on this question.

This is a question not only of vital importance to the economy and the people of Prince Rupert but to Canadian National Railways, who would ship the grain by boxcar into Rupert and to the farmers on the prairies who produce and store that grain, particularly barley, for which the Prince Rupert elevator has been used for some time. I will not go into the economic reasons, the statistical analysis and other arguments for the increase of the capacity of the grain elevator in Prince Rupert, which incidentally have been presented to the minister on a number of occasions, and latterly in a very well documented and prepared brief by the Prince Rupert chamber of commerce of last November, of which I have additional copies which I hope to distribute to the members of the agricultural committee when and if it ever gets mobile.

I wonder whether, to give what I think is an interpretation which is favourable with regard to the consideration the minister is giving to this matter, I could quote briefly from some correspondence dating back to January of last year. I wish to quote just a sentence or two. One of the letters is dated