

*Supply—Agriculture*

that we can draw if we are to believe the minister, and various speakers backed up his arguments. If we are to believe one we must disbelieve the other.

Another thing that seems very strange, Mr. Chairman—and again the minister produced some material to back it up—is the letters that the western members have been receiving from people in their constituencies. I have spoken to numerous Conservative members from western Canada and they have said approximately the same thing as the minister said today, namely the letters which they have received from their constituents against this idea of deficiency payments have outnumbered the ones in favour by anywhere from four to one which the minister used today, to as high as 10 to one, which was mentioned by one hon. member.

When the delegation was down from western Canada many of its members stopped by my office, introduced themselves, discussed the problems and answered questions and so forth. To numerous members of the delegation I put this very question, how can a delegation have such unanimous support apparently across the three provinces and yet the letters which have been received by the members of parliament from those provinces have run as high as 10 to one against the very thing that the delegation is down here to support? They were quite concerned about that and some of them raised something to which some credence could be given. Some of them suspected that there was an active organization busy to ensure that western members would receive letters along those lines. I do not know whether that is so or not, but it is certainly the only solution we can offer to this apparently insoluble problem, where we have almost a complete slate of government members from western Canada saying one thing and a well conducted delegation of 1,100 western farmers saying something different altogether. They said they possibly had neglected their own duties and had not kept their own members properly informed.

With reference to the remarks made by the minister when he rightly pointed out to the members of the official opposition that of the three years deficiency payments for which it is suggested that the farmers should receive some consideration, two of them belong completely to the former Liberal government. That may be quite true, but like the Stanley Cup hockey game which we watched last night, the score may be two to one for the Liberals now but it may be tied up very shortly because time is passing very swiftly and if nothing more is done, and apparently nothing more is contemplated than has been

done in the past, the score will soon be tied at two-two and this government will have two more years in office and the score may be four to two before there is any hope of anything being done about this matter. I would suggest that the government forget about those two years which belong to the former Liberal government. If they do not want to take any responsibility for them, surely they should be able to take the responsibility for the one year for which they are responsible in regard to this problem.

This whole thing, Mr. Chairman, points to only one conclusion, namely the very severe state of confusion which is so apparent both in this house and in the minds of the Canadian people as to just what is the situation in the agriculture industry today. There are possibly many reasons for this confusion. Certainly, one of the most important factors leading to the confusion is the sad discrepancy between the performance of this government and its promises which were made during the last two election campaigns. Another thing which is almost equally bad has already been mentioned, namely the differences in the remarks made by members particularly from the prairie provinces and the farm delegations from those same areas. But there is possibly another reason for this confusion and it may be contained within the minister himself. It may be explained possibly by a little story which has been making the rounds of the various Legion halls in this country in the last while. This goes back to the early days of the last war, at which time the minister was the commanding officer of an artillery unit, according to the story, down in the famous potato-growing province of New Brunswick. This was about the time when the very popular and patriotic thing to do in this country was for everybody to "grow for Britain." The units of the army were encouraged to set a good example to the public and this particular battery of artillery undertook to do so.

Now, sir, the people of New Brunswick, of all people in Canada, should know how to grow potatoes; but apparently that was not good enough for the commanding officer. He insisted on the potatoes being planted western style. Unfortunately, it turned out that they were not planted; they were buried. Through the process of evolution that commanding officer is now our Minister of Agriculture. It is to be hoped, Mr. Chairman, that when the new secretaries are appointed the first one will be a good potato grower from New Brunswick so that we can get that particular aspect of agriculture straightened out. Then, we might suggest that he be rotated with experts in other fields.