

*Supply—Trade and Commerce*

As to beef, the farmers of this country particularly will rejoice—some of the consumers may regret the price increase—in the fact that our cattle exports to the United States have been very heavy indeed. The reason for that is the drought in the southern states for several years until they had to sell off their cattle and get rid of them. I hope a good part of that market can be retained. It is only confusing the issue however if you lead farmers of the country to believe that that was just a new market readily obtained in competition with cattle production in the United States.

In his discussion of his estimates the other night the Minister of Agriculture completely omitted to deal with that aspect of it and I think to that extent he was doing a disservice to the country's farmers. I do not want to refer to the remarks of the Minister of Agriculture on that subject but I noticed that in dealing with this particular aspect of the estimates of the Department of Agriculture the Minister of Trade and Commerce did not deal with that subject at all.

Then there were some other remarks about commodities that were of interest. Exports of uranium are up pretty sharply over the last year. The story of uranium exports is rather interesting. It is due to the very far-sighted policy adopted some years ago by the minister's predecessor. The policy to which I refer was the policy of the atomic energy authorities in this country announcing a fixed price for uranium ore concentrate so that prospectors could go out and prospect for uranium and develop that natural resource. When I hear my hon. friend talking about the development of natural resources I do not know of any better example of what has been done in that field than that far-sighted policy, because of which our present Minister of Trade and Commerce is now able to come into committee of supply and show the results in increased export figures. That policy, of course, was followed up by the firm contracts for the sale of the concentrates as the mines were ready to go into production and that export will, as I understand it, continue and increase until 1962 or 1963.

There is some uncertainty about the market after that and at this stage it is perhaps not useful to crystal-gaze on it. But I wonder whether the minister would give us any information he can on the subject of uranium exports, if he is in a position to do so. He may not be in a position to give much information that is of a firm nature but if he is I would appreciate very much if he would do so.

It is interesting that these three circumstances which I have pointed out in relation to wheat, beef cattle and uranium have rather tended to conceal a situation in our export

trade that would cause genuine concern to careful thinkers on the subject. For instance, there is a decline in the exports of base metals and aluminum which I think must concern the minister greatly. It is quite true that so far as the total figures are concerned the increase in uranium exports has done much to offset that but I think that we should discuss these matters.

Then there is the question of the export of oil. I think we are all genuinely concerned about the voluntary 15 per cent restriction on the import of oil into the United States applicable to Canada as well as to other countries. There is another aspect of that situation, of course. I for one am of the view that it is highly essential for defence reasons that we develop all the oil resources we can on this continent and I am quite unable to understand why, if one accepts this viewpoint, it is desirable that the oil wells should be on the United States side of the line. If they have the strategic military significance I believe them to have, then surely oil wells in Canada are in as urgent need of development as are oil wells in the United States. I would hope that the government would continue to make every effort to remove this obstacle.

I am also a little critical of the government with regard to another aspect of the matter. Oil wells cannot always be developed without dealing with gas as well because it is just not possible to shut the gas in and take the oil out. I hold the view that damage has been done with regard to development in the whole field of oil and gas production, both from the point of view of export as well as internally, by reason of the failure of the government to announce any policy since it took office in June, 1957. As many of the government supporters, particularly the new ones, were speaking in the throne speech and budget debates they seemed to indicate that all history began on June 10, 1957 and I could not help but wish that they would say something about matters affecting the welfare of the country and that they would analyse, as they undoubtedly could and would if they had thought about it, the damage done to the economy by the failure of the government to enunciate and put forward a policy.

The appointment of the royal commission on energy was announced very early in the last parliament but the commission did not begin its sittings then and I for one was never able to understand how the government could not have known of the expected absence of the chairman from the country until December and the long delay that would be involved. I can only hope that the government will formulate and announce its policy soon before more damage is done through