

Supply—Agriculture

be held over in order to—according to the expression that has been used—keep the pipe line filled. The minister has coined several new expressions today and they are extremely interesting. But when he says that they need 78 million pounds of butter in order to make sure that the consuming public will have all the butter they need, I still say he is losing sight of the fact that the consumption of margarine has increased to almost 10 pounds per capita, as I understand it.

In reference to the dominion-provincial conference—and the minister made some slight reference to it—I should like to suggest sincerely that that conference has been of great value—and I will admit that—for the purpose for which it was set up back in the war years. But now I would say that it has simply become a listening conference, to a great degree; it has become a conference listening to dominion officials with long speeches and masses of figures. I think it could serve a useful purpose if committees were set up and some solutions to the various problems were worked out when all these various ministers and officials are here from all across the dominion. I think it would be advantageous to the minister himself and to his departmental officials to have the results which might be achieved by these committees meeting and working on the various problems.

We now come to the statement the minister made on farm income. As I said before, Mr. Chairman, figures can be most misleading. In the first place, all the figures the minister gave to us were gross figures, as he suggested just previously in answer to the Newfoundland member. Does the minister realize what the net position of the farmers is? I should like to ask the minister to define this term "real income". I do not know, but apparently it is a net worth statement. I have always heard of gross income and net income but I had never before heard the term "real income" used. I should like to hear the minister define "real income" and to find out whether it is other than a net worth statement.

This gross income figure means little. I will leave it to the good judgment of the farmers in eastern Canada to answer the minister and to say whether they agree with him when he says that they are better off now than they ever were before. The figures that he gave would indicate that situation. They would indicate that their income has increased practically every year since he became Minister of Agriculture. Of course he forgets that the country has been going ahead in spite of the fact that any particular government was in power and that the value of a dollar now is less than 50 per cent of what it was in former

years. I should also like to ask him if he agrees that there is a parity price. On one occasion previously he admitted in the house that he did not know the definition of parity and that probably nobody else did.

Mr. Gardiner: Not exactly that. I said that none of us agree as to what it ought to be.

Mr. Charlton: That could be said for many things other than parity price. I am using the figure set forth by Dr. Hannam of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture when he says that at the present time—and he made this statement last fall at the dominion-provincial conference—we are back within one point of the position we were in back in 1940. He was referring to the parity price position of the farmers across Canada. That is the only meaningful statement that we can take for actual net worth, namely that the parity position of farmers across Canada is within one point of the position we were in back in 1940. Would the minister suggest that the eastern farmers are now in as good a position as they have ever been in?

Mr. Gardiner: You will notice that I did not say that. It was you who said it. I said that the figures spoke for themselves.

Mr. Charlton: Mr. Chairman, the minister often misleads with figures. By the use of figures he certainly intimated that the eastern farmer was now in better condition or in a better position than he had ever been in previously because he said the \$400 million loss was entirely in the western provinces.

Mr. Gardiner: That is a different thing. I proved that he had more cash than he ever had in that period of time but that does not prove that he is better off.

Mr. Charlton: I am glad to hear the minister make that admission, because I am going to leave it to the farmers of eastern Canada to say whether or not they are better off. I do not care what the minister says. I do not think many people will agree with him. I notice that the minister just patted his own back a little bit for the fact that these figures were so good since he had come into power. I suggest to him sincerely that he is probably the only one that is patting his back because few farmers across Canada today are doing so. I wonder whether the minister deducted the 5 per cent interest they are going to have to pay on the loans before he came to the net worth statement of the western farmers?

Then we have the statement of the Minister of Trade and Commerce made the other day in the House of Commons. I know that I am not supposed to quote from a previous debate in this house but I can at least put it