

Supply—Agriculture

establishment of these various agencies within his administration has only been an excuse for not developing an over-all policy which would concern itself with agriculture in general. On many occasions farm organizations come to Ottawa and ask for a handout, or perhaps I should say for specific pieces of legislation to help in a particular field. Even the stabilization act, from which farmers derive so much benefit, concerns itself with a specific field. Its benefits are felt in specific areas and it is difficult to relate them to any over-all agricultural policy. I think the time has arrived when we should make up our minds what we intend to do about agriculture, what the potential is, how it relates to the industrial potential of this country and what its future is likely to be.

Earlier this afternoon the minister mentioned that when he was in Argentina the people there told him that Canada was known for three things—pulp, that is, paper; dairy cattle and wheat. I was asked the other day if I would be willing to help in the purchase of a large number of cattle for the export market. I do not consider that I am qualified to do this job. I was asked because I do have some knowledge of the dairy field and I suppose if it were a question of buying black and white cows I could have been of some assistance.

An hon. Member: From Kirkland Lake?

Mr. Peters: No, we do not buy cows from Kirkland Lake, but in New Liskeard we export cattle all over the area, even to Rouyn and the ridings of other hon. members from Quebec who are here this evening. We are always happy to export them there, because the provincial government grants a subsidy on purebred cattle which are exported and this means we get a much better price, particularly in Abitibi and Timiskaming, for cattle exported to Quebec than to many other areas. However, a problem has arisen with regard to the export of cattle. Everyone is aware that when we ship wheat from Canada the Canadian government guarantees the grade and condition of that commodity. Yet this does not apply in the case of cattle exports.

A year ago we allowed the shipment of a large number of cattle to Cuba which gave the industry in Canada a very bad name. As I understand it, when he hired a buyer to buy cattle, Castro specified a maximum price to be paid. This meant that the buyer was not necessarily buying the best cattle available; he was buying in a limited market. I think the result did a great deal to hurt the market we had established in central and south America where our standard, for a number of years, has been very good. We are

selling now, to countries like British Guiana, and the government of that country is interested in supporting the registry which has been established in Canada. I think this is a field in which the government should be taking a much more active interest in order that the best possible commodity may be supplied from Canada, leading in turn to the establishment of a better reputation and of a higher volume of sales abroad. I think the government should supervise these operations and give assistance to private enterprise in this field.

The minister will be happy to know that when I had been consulted in this connection I had expressed the opinion that the Hays farms were able to give the best service. The Hays farms is the one place to go because they have the facilities to look after a large quantity of stock. While this is a private enterprise I think it is impossible to guarantee classification and a grade that will be maintained. This must be done in a way which will maintain the standard. I think this is more important at the present time than the money that is being paid for those commodities.

The minister of course is aware that in agriculture there are many other fields which need some assistance now. One of those fields is going to involve the assistance that he has from the branches with which he is now connected, but it is also going to need the assistance of other departments, one of which is the Department of Trade and Commerce. I refer of course to sugar beets. If you ask the housewife in Canada today what is the greatest problem in this country, she will tell you it is the price of sugar. If you travel over every part of Canada this is probably the problem that she will say rates highest on the list of Canadian problems—that is, the price of sugar. If this is so, why do we not decide to grow sugar beets, and why does not the government decide right now that they will guarantee and underwrite the price of sugar and will govern the import of cane sugar, so we can provide a restrictive market for sugar in this country and the means of supplying a large section of the sugar industry with home produced sugar beets. As everyone knows, the sugar beet industry can be expanded rapidly in Canada. We could plan this spring to provide, probably, enough sugar beets to supply the needs of Canada without a great deal of effort. But to do this we would have to guarantee the producers of the sugar beets a reasonable return for their money. Many farmers who produced tobacco last year would find it advantageous to go out of tobacco this year, and they would find their land to be quite capable of producing an immense tonnage of sugar beets.