

*Interim Supply*

I have the privilege and honour of representing one of the major, if not the major agricultural area in the province of British Columbia and I would be remiss if, comparatively early in the session, I did not give some attention to this very important part of our community and economy. During previous debates we have had considerable discussion on various aspects of agriculture. We have thoroughly covered the credit facilities provided for this part of our economy, but while we recognize the importance of credit facilities to our farmers, these facilities in themselves are an indication of the fact that in the past the policies of governments in office were not such as to give the agricultural economy its fair share of the national income.

The farmers are finding it increasingly necessary to seek additional help, and perhaps more generous sources of capital, in order to carry on their operations. Sometimes we think that some of the problems have been resolved, and there are those who feel agriculture is moving into a position where it has little to complain about. Yet we still find that agriculture is caught in the squeeze between increasing costs on the one hand and decreasing returns on the other.

I have in my possession a copy of the brief presented by the Manitoba farmers union to candidates in the last federal election and it points out very clearly that the situation is far from resolved. The problems are still there and the farmers, instead of moving up to a better position, are finding that their net income is decreasing.

I well remember the Minister of Agriculture outlining on one occasion some of the objectives that must be realized by the farming community. He said the first objective for the farmer was to maintain his holdings, the second was to provide for the needs of himself and his family, and the third was to have adequate retirement provision. I think those objectives are not being realized. Recently I spoke to a farmer in the province of Manitoba who told me that for a number of years he had been living on the depreciation of his equipment and holdings, and I believe that is indicative of the position in which many farmers find themselves at the present time. This situation is an indictment of the present and past governments for failing to introduce policies that would bring to the farmers their fair share of the national income and thus enable them to solve their own problems.

The fact that there is a continuing decrease in the number of farms across the country indicates that many farmers have given up

the struggle for survival and, even though there are those who have moved off the land voluntarily, and their farms have been incorporated into larger units, still a great many farmers are off the land because they found they were not able to survive economically.

Agriculture in British Columbia is widely diversified, and this is particularly true of my own area. We have practically every type of farm operation in it. With such a diversified agricultural economy our farmers are faced with all the problems involved in diversified farming, as well as endeavouring to continue the job of providing foodstuffs for this nation and other nations of the world. However, though sharing the struggle for survival, the figures would indicate that that particular province is faring perhaps a little better than the average across the country.

In the past I have criticized governments and administrations for legislation that only applies to certain areas and certain localities. For instance I remember several years ago, when I had the honour to represent Fraser Valley in this house, I pointed out that even though other parts of the country had been able to benefit under P.F.R.A., and the maritimes had been able to benefit under the Maritime Marshland Rehabilitation Act, there was nothing comparable to those acts covering the province of British Columbia. It is true there were isolated projects carried on under P.F.R.A. in British Columbia, but in general the benefits were not applicable.

Yet in spite of those representations about being denied such assistance, I am at present glad that at least we have some indication we will share in the benefits of legislation introduced more recently, and I speak especially of the ARDA program. The province of British Columbia is co-operating in that. It has already set up its committee. Particular projects are presently under consideration and we feel this is going to be of distinct benefit to us.

We also appreciate the fact that under the Farm Credit Act some of the producers in my area have been able to benefit. I am thinking mainly of poultry farmers and greenhouse operators, but I would point out there are still those engaged in various types of agriculture who are faced with an almost impossible position because of the fact that they have not access to adequate financing. For that reason I would urge that the government give continuing attention to the problems of agriculture in all its phases.

I should now like to refer to the disposal of agricultural products. I am proud of the fact that, down through the years, this group