

Agreements Respecting Marginal Lands

upon provincial co-operation, and the government has been able to hide behind the inaction of particular provinces to excuse its own inaction.

If the minister had been more specific in the reply he made to the hon. member for Assiniboia with regard to executive responsibility, with regard to the matter of financial responsibility and the distribution thereof, he would have given us some basis to determine when we may expect action from the government with regard to the long term aspects of this problem. The resolution before us, of course, is not designed to meet the current situation, according to my understanding of what the minister has said. It is long term in its implications. Indeed, if it were intended to have immediate effect we would have expected the minister to give assurances that no action would be taken by the government that would add to the great severity which prevails in the country at the present time in the matter of unemployment.

Since the beginning of the session we have been trying to persuade this administration to take effective steps to deal with certain emergency situations, including unemployment and the most serious problems that the industrial sector of the economy is facing. As most of us know, it is suffering from both short term and long term difficulties, which are reflected in the amount of unemployment and which are certainly not going to be overcome by the timid and confused programs presented by the government since the beginning of the session.

The agricultural sector of the Canadian economy also suffers from both short term and long term problems. The current crisis of Canadian agriculture is illustrated not so much by mounting unemployment, as in the industrial sector, but by declining farm income. I would hope that it was not the intention of the government, before the labours of the committee of the other place were completed, to introduce this measure for the purpose of conveying to the farmers of our country that their present plight was going to be dealt with effectively by this kind of measure. I would hope that the minister would not seek to use this device as a means of diverting our attention from the very serious plight that at this very time confronts the farmers of our country. We cannot forget that if we take this position we are encouraged to do so by the very propaganda of the government. We will not forget their recent statement in one of the résumés of their great achievements when they said this:

Recognition on a scale unsurpassed in Canadian history has been given to the difficult problems of our farm communities. Realistic price supports

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

have been introduced for the first time in our history. Federal aid to Canadian farmers has more than doubled.

This Conservative propaganda is designed as usual to distort the facts and to mislead.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The real test of any farm policy is not the amount of relief received by the farmers; it is to be found in the rate of increase in farm income. This is the only real test of success. When we apply that test, the failure of this government's farm policy appears in its true perspective.

During the last ten full years of the previous administration—that is between 1947 and 1956 inclusive—farm net income was on the average \$1,459 million. In 1958, the first full year of the present government's administration, farm net income reached \$1,417 million, or \$42 million less than the ten-year average under the former Liberal administration. In 1959 farm net income was only \$1,260 million, a figure which represents a drop of about 12 per cent in comparison with that of 1958.

I have not the figures of a farm net income for 1960, but the national accounts provide information on accrued net income of farm operators from farm production. Accrued net income gives some indication of farm net income. The estimate for the first nine months of 1960 showed a further decline of 2.9 per cent as compared with the same period in 1959. These are the most reliable figures available at the moment and they show, first, that in the three full years of Conservative administration farm net income has been consistently lower than the ten-year average under the previous administration. Second, since the first full year of Conservative administration farm income has been declining steadily and the drop may reach as much as 15 per cent.

Those facts give a picture which is far different from the picture given to us by the government. We remember the promises made by the government. Those promises are not going to be fulfilled by the legislation based on this resolution. We remember the promise made to eliminate the cost-price squeeze.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): The hon. member has made a statement and I should like to ask this question, Mr. Chairman. Can he name one promise we made with regard to agriculture that has not been fulfilled or is not on the way toward being fulfilled?