

*Supply—Agriculture*

businessmen in the area have made application to run beef cattle on that land. They wish to rent it themselves and put up the money to raise cattle.

I am sure the government would not be willing to provide those businessmen with a feeding lot to fatten their cattle, but there are some businessmen under the impression that this is going to happen. If it did develop this way, then it would be a very poor method of helping to solve agricultural problems.

I have before me the figures which the minister gave in relation to the number of projects developed under ARDA, but it is important that he tell us what the intention of the government is in relation to ARDA as it affects rural development today. If the government intends to reforest many of the substandard agricultural lands I believe that is worthwhile, but it is not a project suitable to my area. Community pasture is something which will work in some areas but it is completely unsuitable in others. The need for pasture is being met on a commercial basis by companies set up for that purpose in many areas, and this is something which should be considered.

There has been a very bad approach to water conservation in many parts of the country, particularly in Ontario where there is such a great abundance of water but where nothing is being done to conserve it. The little clay belt in northern Ontario at one time had an abundance of water, but in Timiskaming over the last five or six years farmers have had to deepen their wells because the table level has been continuously dropping.

This is one area in which the federal government is responsible because it provides the moneys for the construction of reservoirs on small streams and rivers.

I next wish to deal with the problem of farm credit. Those of us who had anything to do with the Veterans Land Act were very pleased with the amount of credit given under V.L.A. for the benefit of veterans. Most of the veterans had a very happy record of repayment and, more important, the number of veterans who settled on the land and who could make a living off it was very sizeable. Everyone agreed when the old farm loan board gave way to credits arrangements made through the Farm Credit Corporation that this was a step in the right direction. There were weaknesses, of course, and one of the weaknesses was that seldom, if ever, was the land given a proper valuation where it was to be used solely for the purposes of agriculture.

[Mr. Peters.]

It is easy to value land at reasonable rates in the Toronto area where the industrial community is vying with the agricultural purchaser for land. Land values become substantially increased and probably bear a fair relationship to the agricultural potential of that land. In many cases the agricultural potential is far below the actual value of the land. But in other areas, in my own area in particular, the cost of clearing the land is greater than the value which the department allows for a loan in respect of that land. I am not talking about land cleared a hundred years ago. This is land which was cleared within my own lifetime. I believe it is not too difficult to ascertain its true value because one has at least to take into account the total cost of clearing the land and the work done on it. It seems to me that the value placed on such land is often far too low.

There is another problem to which I should like to direct attention. How can young people be encouraged to become farmers? Unless their fathers are willing to mortgage the home farm it is impossible today for young lads to go out and buy enough land to set themselves up as farmers. I know of no young farmer who was able, on his own, to buy a farm which was an economic unit. Yet is this not exactly what we have to make possible in order to get young people on the farms? I say this in the light of the fact that the average age of our farmers today is well over 50. It seems to me this is one of the fields in which the Minister of Agriculture should engage his efforts, and that he should give the committee the benefit of any studies he has conducted with regard to this problem. It may be that the federal government will have to make available to more young farmers the type of education which is given at the Ontario Agricultural College, Kemptville, and some of the other junior colleges. This would make it possible for a department to evaluate the knowledge of students attending the courses who are likely to need to borrow comparatively large sums of money to purchase the agricultural land they will require.

The minister knows that many people who have been farming for a long time are only now able to pay off mortgages they raised many years ago. So agriculture is not in the happy state in which some other industries find themselves. The future does not look good and this is because we have not yet given to agriculture the over-all consideration it deserves. The other day the minister read out a list of acts affecting agriculture. He said the administration of these acts formed part of his responsibilities and that the taking away of one or two of these measures did not make a very big difference. I disagree. I think the minister must be well aware that the