

*Supply—Agriculture*

their production so as to meet the requirements of the Quebec market, because, as I said, in several fields, production is not up to consumption within the province of Quebec.

Some thought should be given to eastern agriculture in particular because since western farmers are favoured by bumper wheat crops and enjoy many more advantages due to their fertile lands, eastern farmers often find themselves in an inferior position.

Mr. Chairman, without any intention of flattering the government, I must point out that the present administration has taken a very wise step in favour of eastern farmers by appointing a minister of rural development under a measure that will, I hope, soon be passed by the house, in order to create officially the office of minister of rural development. I believe that our achievements have exceeded our promise in that regard. As a matter of fact, we had promised during the 1963 election campaign to appoint an associate minister of agriculture. But what could an associate minister have done more than the associate deputy minister of agriculture?

We, the members from Quebec, asked the Prime Minister during a caucus to give us two ministers of agriculture. We wanted more than what we had promised in our electoral platform, and I think that the fact of having appointed a French speaking minister of rural development who, even if he is not minister of agriculture for eastern Canada, will be in a position to deal more closely with problems of agriculture in eastern Canada, because rural development is precisely the primary problem in Quebec, a great step forward.

Mr. Chairman, I feel that ARDA should be put into operation in Lotbinière constituency and be successful. I intend to see to it that the farmers of my riding may take advantage of ARDA.

I referred a while ago to the number of farms in the constituency of Lotbinière and I said that some were economical while others were marginal. There is in Lotbinière some thriving parishes such as St. Edouard, St. Pierre les Becquets—with which the hon. member for Nicolet-Yamaska (Mr. Vincent) is well acquainted—and St. Antoine.

On the other hand, we have other parishes where lands, without being completely uncultivated, are poor. At Val Alain, Joly and St. François, it would be possible, through ARDA, to give a new direction to farming and help farmers who live in those parishes and whose income is clearly insufficient. I

[Mr. Choquette.]

feel that if a well suited program were applied, under ARDA, those parishes could enjoy greater prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, we could also use another method to restore the economy of rural regions; that method is part of our political platform.

We advocated the industrialization of those rural regions and there cannot be a better time for me to urge the Minister of Industry (Mr. Drury) to make all necessary efforts so that an industry may be established in St. Sylvestre, where the radar station will be closed. That would be in perfect agreement with the electoral program we put forward.

St. Sylvestre is another rural area and if an industry could settle there, it would make up for the losses resulting from the future closing down of the radar station that had brought a measure of economic activity to the region.

Mr. Chairman, agriculture in Quebec is affected by another very important matter, that of the exorbitant prices of feed grain and mixtures. There again, the new minister of rural development will be able to make his influence felt and show his efficiency in view of the fact that the storage of feed grain will come under his jurisdiction. And everyone knows that the problem of feed grain is closely linked to that of agriculture in Quebec.

The Quebec farmers want to pay the same price as the western farmers for feed mixtures and feed grains. Let the government pay the freight from Fort William up to the province of Quebec, so that our farmers can pay the same price as the western farmers for feed mixtures. That is legitimate.

But, Mr. Chairman, it would be necessary to hold an inquiry into the speculation which takes place. In fact, for a long time now, the Catholic farm union has been asking for a grain agency in eastern Canada. It also requests that speculation regarding the sale of feed mixtures and grains to Quebec farmers be restrained and that since a claim from the Catholic farm union comes within this problem, another problem affecting the eastern farmers, that is on every dollar of farm production, on a generalized and average basis, 58 cents only go into the farmer's pockets while 42 cents are going somewhere else, maybe in the pockets of the middlemen, speculators, in short of those who probably want to take advantage of the farm people. I am told that in the United States, the government is considering the setting up of an inquiry in order to study that striking spread between the farmers' income and the total cost of production.