

Supply—Agriculture

We have not heard the Minister of Agriculture deal with the price index of goods bought by farmers.

As for the farm prices index, it was 234.6 in 1956, and three years later, in 1959, it reached 238.1, an increase of 3.5.

Prices of goods and services increased by 25.9 while farm product prices did so by only 3.5. In addition, with the prices the farmer now gets for his product, he can buy 27 per cent less of the goods and services he needs, as compared to 10 years ago.

If we examine the report of the royal commission on price spreads of food products, we note that in 1957 farmers obtained for every retail sale dollar: 53.9 per cent for beef; 59.7 per cent for pork and 77.1 per cent for butter. I could mention a lot more products but shall mention only a few: on the price of canned tomatoes, the farmer's share was 18.3 per cent; on evaporated whole milk, 41.1 per cent.

In 1949, for every dollar paid by the consumer for farm products, farmers received 59 cents, whereas they were getting 44 cents in 1958.

Yet, as reported in the April 27 issue of the *Ottawa Journal*, the Prime Minister had this to say in Newcastle on April 26, 1957:

(Text):

His party's agricultural program, he said, would include a system of flexible price supports, aggressive salesmanship around the world for Canadian farm products and an early commonwealth conference.

Between 1951-1955 he said, the farmer's share of the consumer price dollar dropped from 59 to 51 cents.

(Translation):

That is what the Prime Minister was saying two and a half years ago.

Today, the figure has reached 44 cents. The Prime Minister dared to say, as did the Minister of Agriculture himself, as reported on page 255 of *Hansard* of January 23, 1959:

Therefore I feel it is quite apparent that the cost-price squeeze which was a cause of hardship to the farmer under the Liberal administration ever since 1951-52 has been finally halted and reversed.

Mr. Chairman, only after we have compiled all the figures for the years during which the Conservative party will have been in office shall we be able to realize all the damage caused to our farmers.

[Mr. Boulanger.]

Since the Agricultural Stabilization Act has not achieved the purpose for which it was passed, I suggest that the government should establish a commission composed of farm experts and leaders of farmers' unions, in order to consider and work out a plan consistent with farmers' needs. In a word, an advisory committee capable of establishing an over-all plan for amending the Agricultural Stabilization Act, so as to set definite support prices, in relation not to some percentage of the average price over the last ten years but to the production cost index.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture and the government to instruct the committee on agriculture to discuss the Agricultural Stabilization Act and to investigate the estimated loss to our farmers.

I am making these suggestions, because I have some doubt as to the ability of the Minister of Agriculture. It is hardly possible that the experts, or the officials of the Department of Agriculture, who have been advising the Minister of Agriculture and all the other cabinet ministers these last twenty two years, are not still giving the present Minister of Agriculture, and the present government, the same sound advice. However, this act has not achieved the expected results, and I challenge the minister to prove that it has helped give the farmer his fair share of the national income, to which he is entitled. The net income of farmers, as I said a moment ago, has been \$88 million less in 1959 than in 1958, in spite of those \$57 million we are now called upon to vote.

I challenge the Minister of Agriculture to show us that the Agricultural Stabilization Act has safeguarded the interests of the small farmer. Moreover, I challenge him to show us that farmers have known, 12 months in advance, the prices of farm products such as eggs and pork. I also challenge him to show us that his act has not been the cause of a price upheaval in the field of farm products in the course of the last two or three years.

If the minister has nothing to fear, he will accept this challenge and ask the committee to look into that matter and to report to the house. His refusal will be the clear evidence that his government has repudiated its promises, the Agricultural Stabilization Act and farm people.

(Text):

Item agreed to.