

Supply—Agriculture

found at page 2469 of *Hansard*, the Minister of Trade and Commerce said:

I believe it will meet a very great need because we are always encountering the problem of cost and income in so far as agriculture is concerned.

Such an inquiry into farm costs is greatly needed in the formulation of the government's long term agricultural policy. Such a step should have been taken years ago by the previous government. The fact that they did not undertake such a survey and did not have any definite figures explains why their agricultural policies during 22 years lacked any long range objective.

There has been a great deal of loose talk about farm costs. I say "loose talk" because definite figures are not available. When I was in Ottawa with the prices board in the 1940's the question of average farm costs was always coming up and no one had a definite answer, not even the farm organizations. I recall one conference of prices board officials with farm groups when the question of the cost of producing a bushel of wheat was raised. There were almost as many different answers as there were farmer representatives in the room.

I mention this, Mr. Chairman, in this committee to emphasize the importance of the farm cost survey this fall. The undertaking of this farm cost survey indicates the determination of this government to tackle and solve Canada's farm problems. I am sure that the prairie farmers will accept this \$40 million supplementary payment in the spirit in which the government is paying it, as immediate help in a problem that can only be solved by a long range program, such as a program of better farm credit, national crop insurance, better land use and greater wheat sales, which this government is undertaking. The farm cost survey this fall is, as I said before, an indication of this government's determination to tackle the farm problem and to solve it.

Mr. Nasserden: In rising to take part in this debate, I am reminded of a day many years ago in the history of our country when the minister of agriculture saw his sincere efforts to help misunderstood by those whom he sought so diligently to assist. I refer, of course, to the five-cent payment to which reference has been made in this debate, a payment that was made during the period when the Hon. Robert Weir was minister of agriculture. This payment went to the farmers who produced the grain, but did not go to farmers who did not have those bountiful crops of grain. It is for this reason we have this estimate based on an acreage payment which will go out to farm people, and which will give them something

to make up the difference between the sale price and the cost of production.

During the past several days I have had reason to think back over the past 20 years during which I have been actively engaged in the agricultural industry. Before that, I recall doing the chores on my father's farm. I recall various responsibilities from time to time, and particularly those which resulted from service in positions which resulted in one being continually confronted with the problems of agriculture. On this occasion I should like to put on record, for this parliament and for succeeding parliaments as well, the acceptance of the government's action, with the usual reservation that they pursue this whole matter of farm security and the attempt to ensure that the people engaged in this industry shall enjoy a fair share of the national income. The Prime Minister did a creditable job today and a few days ago in presenting the overall agricultural situation in this country, that is as creditable a job as anyone could do before the report of the price spreads commission is made public and before the survey that is now being conducted into farm living costs and costs of production in these various areas of Canada where agriculture forms the basic industry is completed.

It seemed to me that as he spoke the other day, and again today, he spoke as no other man in the recent history of our industry or of our parliament has spoken on behalf of those engaged in the agricultural industry. He spoke with a feeling that came from recognition of how closely the farm people of this country are confined to overalls. This is one of the reasons why I am convinced that the legislation which will follow will be the type that will endure for many years to serve this industry that is basic to Canada's economic welfare. From the very beginning, I have been one of those who has held the view that our first consideration should be the adoption of those measures which will help to build a sound national policy and which will apply with equality to farm people in every segment of our industry and in all parts of the country.

What is of even more importance is the fact that this session has resulted in the development of some of the bases of that agricultural policy, and of equal importance is the fact that even now the remaining part of that program is only awaiting the application of a reliable basis upon which to put these things into operation for the benefit of the people in all parts of Canada. The present item in the estimates is a short terms measure which will be welcomed by the farmers in western Canada, especially in the light of the long