

*Supply—Agriculture*

Minister of Agriculture made last night, or I should say the wonderful speech he thought he made. It won't be so wonderful when the farmers read it, because this Liberal government will probably lose the only two or three members it has from agricultural areas when the next election occurs.

I would like to commend the Leader of the Opposition on the most reasonable and factual speech that he made last night. He showed the farming element throughout Canada that he has a full grasp of agricultural problems and that he will be able to represent the farming industry as well as every other industry there is when the time comes. He certainly showed up well on agriculture.

● (8:20 p.m.)

I was a little surprised at the minister making the speech he made because it was just a rerun of the speech he gave us on the main estimates last fall,—exactly the same speech. But of course this government is prone to having reruns of things, so that should not surprise anybody. When he told us in so many words that the farmers had never had it so good, I was reminded of the time 11 years ago—the second time I was a candidate for election to parliament—when the then minister of agriculture, the right hon. gentleman who chose to be known as “Mr. Agriculture” in Canada, visited my constituency. As a matter of fact he arrived there the day after I was nominated as a candidate. I believe I would be generous if I said that he spoke to 300 people for three and a half hours, using three million words, and never said anything except that the farmers never had it so good. I believe that was one reason I was elected as a member of parliament. Therefore, I might suggest to the minister that when he tells the farmers they never had it so good he is probably alienating what little affection they have left for the party which he hopes to lead next month. May I say that if he realizes his ambition, which may be a vain one, I hope he will do something more to help the farmers when he holds the top position than he has done as Minister of Agriculture.

My hon. friend from Provencher the other day said that the farmers do not wonder what the minister has done for them. They just wonder what this government has done to them. They know very well of course. The minister's speech also reminded me of the small boy who runs through a cemetery at midnight and hollers as loud as he can in

[Mr. Fane.]

order to have the courage to do it. I wonder whether the minister really realizes what the situation in the farm industry in Canada is. His speech certainly did not give the true picture, because the farmers of this country are not as well off as he would have everybody believe. As I said, when the news of his speech goes out through the country the farmers will have a big laugh about how well off they are.

It seems strange that the minister appears to be the only person interested in farming who does not know what the situation is. Perhaps he just will not believe the truth. There's none so blind as him who will not see. I find it difficult to believe that the information the minister receives from his high priced and well educated advisers could be so incorrect. Surely the members of his staff are aware of what is going on. Surely the minister himself must be aware of what is going on, especially when he sees 23,000 farmers from the provinces of Ontario and Quebec come down here, as they did last summer, to complain about the situation. Delegations representing the dairy farmers, the farm unions, the National Farm Union and the Federation of Agriculture have also come to Ottawa. In any event the minister has many people facing him in this house who can tell him what it is all about. We do not speak merely for the sake of speaking, and surely he might listen to some of us.

I realize the minister does not have very much farm support behind him, but surely the members of his party who do represent farming areas could tell him in caucus or in his office what the facts really are. There is no doubt that he hears straight talk on the matter of agriculture from members of all the opposition parties. The trouble is that the members of the government do not realize that they do not have an agricultural policy, and that what little dribs and drabs they are attempting to get by with simply are not adequate in providing the necessary help to the farming element of this country.

Very often in the house we hear about wheat. Ever since I came to Ottawa 10 years ago, wheat has appeared to be the main subject discussed by the western members. At the present time the price of wheat is down 22 cents a bushel. I believe this is a direct result of the action of the Minister of Trade and Commerce in allowing the international wheat agreement to lapse for about a year. This has had a drastic effect on the primary industry of this country.