

Supply—Agriculture

is a very smart gentleman from the Department of Agriculture who acted as public relations man for the agriculture committee. While I do not know his functions, I do know that he has many of the answers to the problems of agriculture. I think this is what we want in parliament—some answers.

The problems of agriculture are pretty well known to anyone who is interested in reading any of the farm publications. These problems have been faced by farmers for many years. It is true that many of these problems cannot be solved by the farmers themselves. They are going to have to be assisted through government agencies, through research and marketing schemes. I believe the role of the Department of Agriculture will be found in the field of redevelopment. I have been concerned by some of the statements that have been made in relation to ARDA. I believe it is true that ARDA was not born overnight. It was not a program developed to solve any particular problem at a specific time, but was a program for rural redevelopment and was aimed at solving some of the problems of agriculture over a long period of time.

I am surprised when I hear the minister say how much better it has been in the last few months than it has been for several years. I wonder how much better. I do not think it is good enough to say there have been so many loans advanced or so much money spent under the ARDA program. I feel we want to know the direction in which the program is heading. We should like to know how much progress has been made in this program for the redevelopment of agriculture. This is a long term program and the amount of money that is being spent is not of particular interest. What is of interest is what is being accomplished with whatever money is being spent. We know that agricultural matters will no doubt receive a great deal of attention during the latter part of this week at the dominion-provincial conference taking place in Quebec, because there is a similarity in the problem as between one province and another. Of course the similarity in that respect is not as marked in what is being done under ARDA.

We used to listen with rapt attention to the former minister of agriculture when he was telling us his dream that all the problems of agriculture would be solved by the ARDA program. But at one time we saw ARDA being used as one of the political planks in an election campaign, and it was something we were no happier about then than we are now, when we hear the present minister talking about endorsing more ARDA projects over the last few months than were endorsed in the preceding number of years.

This is not too important. What is important is the result of the projects being developed, in what field they are being developed, and how they fit in with the over-all picture. If ARDA is to solve the problems of the farmer we should know in what field ARDA development is taking place.

Many years ago in eastern Ontario a farmer could make a good living off 20 acres of arable land. He might have had a 160 acre farm, although many of the farms in the Ottawa valley were just 80 acres; but the farmers' living was made off 15 or 20 acres of cultivated land. Many of the farms had, and still have, up to 40 acres of substandard land which does not produce a reasonable crop.

It is interesting to know how much agriculture produces in earned income. Just the other day we were talking to a farmer who had a specialized crop and who estimated he was getting \$5,000 an acre from his farm. In western Canada an acre produces about 17 bushels of wheat, which nets about \$35 an acre. There are many farmers in eastern Canada who earn less than that per acre. In fact there are some who do not get more than several hundred dollars net income from their entire farms.

It was with this in mind that I personally endorsed the ARDA program and felt it had a role to play in the future of agriculture. This meant we would do some of the things which the former minister of agriculture advocated, although we disagreed with some of the things he said because they were too visionary. It may not have been possible to put one farmer in charge of a block of 20 or 30 farms and have him handle the reforestation, working for the government as a tree farmer and supplementing his income up until the time the trees were of harvestable size, although this is something that is being done by many municipalities in the United States which have small wood lots from which they raise enough money to pay the total taxes of the townships.

I believe we should receive a detailed report from the minister with regard to what is happening. I can tell him what is happening with one ARDA project in my area. It is a project I welcome, where the provincial government has taken in an area of about 640 acres, about half of which is cleared. It is very good land, and in my opinion will provide grazing for quite a large number of cattle. In fact it is safe to say its productivity will be equal, in grazing terms, to a plot five times that size in western Canada. But without waiting to see what development the ARDA people would do, some