

Supply—Agriculture

AFTER RECESS

and I shall let it go at that. The minister said something else when speaking in the debate on May 13 which since then has been proven entirely wrong.

An hon. Member: Six o'clock.

Mr. Argue: As a further excuse why Bill No. 22 could not be passed, or something similar to the principle contained therein, he said that it was not constitutional. We find that suggestion in a telegram sent a few weeks ago by the president of the United Grain Growers Elevator Company to the minister.

Mr. Philpott: Could it be you do not want to vote on the amendment?

Mr. Argue: The hon. member knows that his suggestion is completely incorrect.

An hon. Member: Six o'clock.

Mr. Argue: And to prove it, if the house wants to wait for a vote, it is quite all right with me. But first I wish to make one or two further points before I sit down.

An hon. Member: Six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: May I simply inform the house that the amendment is in order but that it must be modified in form so it will read:

. . . this bill be not now read a second time, but be it resolved that in the opinion of this house consideration should be given to the proposal that the wheat board allocation . . .

—and so on. I am sure the hon. member will agree this is the standard form of amendment to the motion for second reading, and therefore I have made the amendment conform.

Mr. Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I drew it up very hurriedly.

Mr. Knowles: And you are only a lawyer.

Mr. Speaker: As it is six o'clock the house will revert at eight o'clock to the business which was interrupted at five o'clock. If it is agreeable, I shall leave the chair now.

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Applewhaite in the chair.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Administration service—

1. Departmental administration, including advisory committee on agricultural services, \$496,998.

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

50433—295½

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. MacLean: Mr. Chairman, when the work of the committee was interrupted at five o'clock I was referring to the figures the minister had given having to do with the condition of agriculture in this country. The figures he gave in most cases had reference to the last four years. I was pointing out that almost invariably statistics can be made to support either side of a question. The figures he gave would not indicate what sort of trend has existed in the last couple of years, whether it was up or down. Neither do they indicate the conditions which might exist in a particular area of the country. Those figures might be even more misleading, because I believe I am right when I say they were not given in terms of constant dollars or terms of constant purchasing power.

I would point out in this connection that according to the last report on farm net income the net income in connection with farming dropped very drastically from 1953 to 1954, to the extent of 33 per cent. In the minister's own province there was a severe drop of 73 per cent. I do not wish to labour this point, but I would warn the minister that if, in good faith, one allows himself to be misled by statistics, he may come to the wrong conclusion. I am reminded of the statistician who had the misfortune to be drowned in a lake, the average depth of which was only two feet.

I would refer particularly to agriculture in the maritime provinces, especially in Prince Edward Island. I consider my province of Prince Edward Island one of the finest places on the face of the earth in which one could live—that is, provided he could make a living. That seems to be the rub. Our chief industry is agriculture. I note that net farm income figures for Prince Edward Island show for 1952 an amount of \$20.9 million, for 1953 a drop to \$12.9 million and for 1954 a figure which remained almost at the same level as that for 1953. As a matter of fact I believe there was a slight drop of about 1 per cent, bringing the figure down to about \$12.8 million.

I do not intend to refer to the very complex causes which have brought this condition about, except to say I am pleased that consideration is now being given to the possibility of changing the tariff on potatoes, because the potato crop is our chief cash crop in Prince Edward Island and has a very important effect on the net income of the average farmer there.

Fluctuations in price are not the only factors entering into the farm net income