

*Supply—Agriculture*

been in the province of the Leader of the Opposition, but I would not presume to make a judgment on agriculture in that area. These are the things about which we have to be concerned in connection with agriculture if the farmers are to continue to provide food for Canadians at reasonable prices, or indeed in some respects to provide food at all.

Someone mentioned the corn growers and stated that if pressure is kept on them they may not continue in that business. In some sectors of agriculture we may very well reach the ridiculous position of importing food which we could very well produce ourselves because of our resources in land and people. A report appeared in the *Globe and Mail* to the effect that W. A. Stewart stated farm income results may be hard to swallow. This is the minister of agriculture of the province of Ontario speaking. The article goes on to quote the minister as saying that he hopes the report of the committee which they set up will bring new vitality to the industry and a new appreciation of the place of agriculture in the total economy of Ontario. This minister believes there must be a thorough review and that we must rectify the serious problems that now exist in agriculture.

One can look at the report of the recent outlook conference held here in Ottawa and find that a decline is forecast in the income of farmers. The farmer's income is down already but there is going to be more of the same. The forecast is for a 6.4 per cent increase in the price index of the goods and services used by farmers. A similar increase occurred in this index last year, but the farmers are supposed to be content with static prices for their produce.

According to the *Globe and Mail* of November 19 the federal Minister of Agriculture criticized the farmers on several counts. It is the privilege of the minister to say what he thinks, I suppose. I hope this newspaper did not misquote him because if he was misquoted it would certainly be unfortunate. The *Globe and Mail* is read by many city people and they would believe these comments made by the minister. The minister accused the farmers of basing their case on half-learned lessons in economics and of ignoring social and economic realities. He said also that the farmers had bought tractors that were too large and paid high prices for land.

Let me say to this house that over a long period of years the farmer has merely been reacting to the economic circumstances in which he has found himself. The farmer does

not make the economic laws or the economic circumstances in which he has to operate. He reacts to the industrial society in which we live and to the economic laws of that society. Over the years I have listened to economists, some of them employed by government and some of them in universities. They have said that the answer to the problem of the farmers is one of scale, that what we need in this industry, as in all other industries, is to get bigger and then we would be over the hump. Is this not what the farmer is doing when he acquires land and buys the equipment with which to operate a farm? If there is going to be a change in the economic laws under which the farmer operates, well and good. Let us define those laws and let us know where we are going.

I believe we will have to reorient ourselves to some extent in agriculture. Reorientation may be the key to our success in that on the North American continent and in the other advanced countries in the world farmers have proven they have the ability to produce farm products. But given this ability to produce food, Mr. Chairman, the fact is that we find market prices depressed.

• (4:30 p.m.)

I should like to say something about the present situation in western Canada, which is now widely reported in the eastern press. It usually requires a fair-sized boom or a fair-sized disaster on the prairies to attract the attention of the press in eastern Canada. But the disaster in the west has now reached such proportions that it is receiving a great deal of attention. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, we have been slow to react to it. It is only in the last week or so that we have seen the Canadian Wheat Board and others meeting together to discuss what can be done in terms of handling, drying and transporting grain.

I should like to refer to a few of the headlines that have appeared in the *Western Producer*, a western farm paper. According to the edition for October 10, only 56 per cent of the crop had been combined. According to one of the main news stories in the October 17 edition, proper drying temperatures are important. In that issue there is an article dealing with drying grain and how it should be done. According to the October 24 issue, little dry grain is to be seen. As far back as October 24, well over one month ago, the forecast was made that in Saskatchewan and Alberta there would be very little dry grain as a result of weather conditions.