

Supply—Agriculture

When the hon. member for Assiniboia talks about betrayal, I never know whether he is talking about the betrayal of the Regina manifesto or of the Winnipeg manifesto or the Knowles manifesto or the Argue manifesto. I think the western farmer will know where the real betrayal lies when that marriage referred to in the Knowles manifesto is brought about between the C.C.F. party and certain labour groups in this country. Then the farmer will know when his machinery increases in cost just where the betrayal of western Canada took place. I am quite confident that when that marriage of the C.C.F. takes place the C.C.F. members from the four western constituencies will be defeated and the Conservative members who sit on the rump side of the house will be all back in their places.

Mr. McMillan: We have heard some discussion today about wheat farmers, both in western Canada and in Ontario. I think the western wheat farmer, like the farmer in any other part of Canada, is a realist and I do not think his opinions can be changed by a drink of liquor. If they were so entertained by some members of the Conservative party as has been said I do not think it is the business of any of the rest of us.

I have every sympathy for the western farmer, as I have for farmers in all other parts of Canada and certainly unless he is farming on a large scale with modern machinery he is facing considerable difficulties at the present time. After listening to the previous speaker this afternoon I have all the greater sympathy with him, because the hon. member for Bow River has brought home to us the high prices which must be paid for implements and machinery.

I do not intend, however, to discuss western farming. I want to refer to a special type of farming in the Niagara district. I want to refer to fruit farming in Ontario and, more particularly, to peaches. The peach crop in 1958 exceeded the peach crop of 1957 by about 15 per cent. The annual meeting of the Ontario peach growers marketing board was held about eight weeks ago at Grimsby and the secretary of that board reported that last year's peach crop was good and that it had exceeded the 1957 crop by something like 15 per cent. Purchases of peaches by processors in 1958 amounted, however, only to 27,444 tons compared with 30,027 tons in 1957. This was a decrease of 10 per cent. The total value of the crop amounted to \$2,227,000, and when one includes the \$13 a ton paid by the government under the stabilization plan, this amounts to \$605,000 less than in 1957. And even with this \$13

[Mr. Woolliams.]

taken into account the price obtained for peaches last year was the lowest obtained in years. The same applied to asparagus.

Now previous to 1957 the asparagus crop had been at 23 to 22 cents per pound. In 1957 it fell to 22 cents and 21½ cents. When this government came into power I think they set a deficiency payment of three cents below the 18 cent floor price and the farmers never got any more than 15 cents from the processor after that. They got the 15 cents plus the three cents.

In 1958, the number of peach growers selling to processors in the Niagara district declined by nearly 12½ per cent, from 1,362 in 1957 to 1,195 in 1958. One reason, of course, was the high cost of production and the low price received for peaches. Another reason this year was the closing down of processing plants. Some of these plants were bought out by United States interests and were not opened. In some cases it was not known whether or not these plants would open, and unless peach producers had made other arrangements for selling their crops, in cases where the plants did not open they could not get rid of them and the peaches rotted on the trees.

I think our two governments should cooperate in helping the fruit farmers to build processing plants. The money would not be lost; it could be amortized over a number of years and the fruit and vegetable farmers would be able to sell their products. Moreover, the money would be spent in Canada and avoid the importation of a lot of fruit from the United States and some other countries, fruit which, I think, is of an inferior quality. What I have said with regard to peaches applies in varying degrees to other fruits and to some vegetables. These processing plants could be used for other fruits and for some vegetables, apart from peaches.

I believe that the main problem which faces the farmer is the obtaining of long and short term credit. This applies to vegetable and fruit farmers as well as to farmers in Ontario generally. The fruit and vegetable growers need short term credit for fertilizer spraying, baskets and so on. At the present time they must pay at least 6 per cent for their money. They also need long term credit for the erection of storage facilities, packing sheds and other buildings. And I am sure they would appreciate it if this government would provide them with processing plants. I am sure this money would be returned. I realize that interest rates must be reasonable and that the Minister of Agriculture should see that they are reasonable.