

Supply—Agriculture

hon. members in the official opposition thought I was making a political speech. I do not quite understand why the allegations of the Leader of the Opposition were not political in the opinion of members of the opposition, but apparently they were not. If the statistics on which he based his conclusion as to the percentage of the agricultural vote he is going to get in the next election are no better than the statistics on which he based the context of his speech, then he had better revise them because they are not very sound. There was a time when there was an hon. member in this house who, I understand, used to commune with the spirits before he made an important decision. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition communes, not with any spirits in any outer world but with the spirits down on Bay street, before he makes any decision.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Greene: If he received those statistics on which he based his agricultural conclusions from that source, I suggest he had better get a new medium or it may be that his entire prognostication, political as well as agricultural, will be in error.

I point out, too, that the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings made some allusion to political speeches. He referred also on several occasions, not so much to the situation as it existed in Canada, but the situation which existed in the province of Nova Scotia. I am not sure whether the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings took exception to the fact that gross and net incomes of farmers had gone up all across Canada. I noticed that most of the political speeches came from members of the official opposition, and I take it that this was a rather concerted and planned political effort on their part. They referred to the Minister of Agriculture having stated that the farmers had never had it so good. This, I presume, is supposed to be a very crafty and Machiavellian political technique on their part, to describe this government and this minister.

● (9:10 p.m.)

Let me point out, Mr. Chairman, that I think I have made as many addresses as anybody dealing with the plight of the farmers and the contribution that they have made to the economy of this country. However, not too many of the speeches of hon. members opposite told both sides of the story. They have not been telling the consumers of Canada that they never had such a good deal, and

[Mr. Greene.]

that they should be prepared to pay more for their food in order that the farmers of Canada could get a better living.

I have often said, Mr. Chairman, and I shall continue to say, that no sector of the economy of this country makes a greater contribution than the agricultural sector does to the total well-being of Canadian citizens. No sector of the Canadian economy has had more difficult problems in an era of transition. However, I do try to make my decisions and to reach my conclusions on a factual basis, not on political premises to the effect that "Things were grand when we were in", or "Oh my, weren't they fine when we were in office?" despite the fact that all the statistics and data show that the most difficult days that agriculture ever faced in this country were during the period that the Conservative party was in office.

Hon. gentlemen opposite may have been quite successful in the past in selling the story to the western farmer that they were his friend—though they did very little for the western farmer when they were in office, as the statistics indicate—but they have not fooled the eastern farmer. The eastern farmer knows that at no time did they ever do anything on his behalf, and again the statistics very clearly indicate this to be the case.

To return to the comments of the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings, who apparently made a "non-political" political speech, the hon. member alleged that conditions in Nova Scotia were very, very bad and that the income of all farmers in that province had gone down by 30 per cent. I had particularly avoided speaking about any particular province, especially the province of Nova Scotia—and this despite the political speech of the Leader of the Opposition—because in view of the circumstance that the hon. gentleman who is now in this house as Leader of the Opposition, had previously been premier of the great province of Nova Scotia, I thought it would be unfair to point to the unfortunate conditions prevailing in that province, particularly in the realm of agriculture, and I refrained from so doing.

However, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings was very careful to point out in great detail how very sad was the state of the agricultural industry in the province in which his present leader had been premier for many years.

Mr. Nowlan: Would the minister permit a question?