

Supply—Agriculture

so forth regarding agriculture, has given him a much better picture than he has indicated to the house.

As far as some of the specific points which the hon. member for Essex East was talking about are concerned, he mentioned first of all the delegation which came down here from western Canada asking for deficiency payments on three past crops of grain. I would point out to him that two of the crops on which they were asking payment were grown and marketed during the period the Liberals were in power. The hon. member was implying that the government is responsible for that, but any deficiency they had was before the Liberals went out of office. What did the Liberals do? They did nothing in connection with that matter.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes, we did.

Mr. Argue: Both the same.

Mr. Harkness: It speaks ill of the hon. member for Essex East to try to set himself up as a champion of the members of this delegation, because as I said, two of three of the crops for which they demanded payment were grown during the administration of the government to which the hon. member belonged and were their responsibility.

The next thing the hon. member mentioned was that we said the support plan we were going to put into effect would be much better than anything the Liberals had, and the hon. member was doubting that this was the case. The support plan we put into effect under the stabilization act is a great deal better than anything the Liberals had, and covers more products. For example, during the past year we had 23 products under price support. During the whole eleven years in which the Liberals operated the old agricultural prices support act they supported only 15 commodities, and never more than five or six at any one time. That is one sort of arithmetical measure of the great increase in the scope of the stabilization legislation compared with the legislation of the government to which the hon. member belonged.

In addition, the levels at which these commodities have been supported have been relatively high so far as a number of commodities are concerned, particularly dairy products which command the highest prices enjoyed by dairy farmers anywhere in the world. I think the hon. gentleman should be very happy that this has been the situation, instead of trying to condemn what has been done. He said something about the support price for corn, and was asking a support price of \$1.45. I should like to point out to him how unrealistic this is, and apparently

how little knowledge he has of the situation when he asks for a support price of \$1.45 for corn grown in Canada, because the support price in the United States this year is \$1.12.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I was referring to the request made by the corn producers themselves, and I was asking the minister to tell us his reaction to their representations.

Mr. Harkness: We have been in touch with the corn growers on this subject on numerous occasions, and we asked them to work out some definite basis on which a support price could be founded. The great difficulty arises because of varying degrees of dryness. If the corn is mechanically dried the value of the product for making corn flour and products of that sort is immediately decreased. It cannot be used for some of these purposes and, therefore, it is an extremely difficult thing to arrive at any basis on which a support price could be put into effect. That is the sole reason why there has been any difficulty or hold-up regarding the support price, and the farmers down there know that quite well.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): They have a support price in the United States.

Mr. Harkness: Yes.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Well, the same situation prevails.

Mr. Harkness: No, it does not.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): There is the same moisture problem.

Mr. Harkness: No. The hon. member also asked a question in connection with the support price for soybeans. It is well known that we do not follow the policy of saying some considerable time in advance that we are going to set a certain price. The price will be set after we have obtained all the information necessary from the growers and after we have received the advice of the advisory committee of the stabilization board on the matter. I am certainly not in a position to state what the support price on soybeans will be.

The hon. member went on with great dialectic to try to paint a picture of distress and desperation in the agricultural industry in eastern Canada. He said the situation was very poor, and that he was extremely concerned about it. If the hon. gentleman will look at the table I gave on March 6, which he will find on page 1679 of *Hansard*, he will see that gross income in Ontario and in Quebec was in each case considerably higher than the farmers have ever earned.