

The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker

ing the ten months of 1948 fell by \$144 million compared to those of the previous year. This happened despite the extension of credits, and \$600 million Canada received in United States dollars or paid by loans to the countries under the Marshall plan. The time has come for the government to tell us what it intends to do with regard to agriculture; whether or not the farmers are to find themselves caught between continued high prices for the things that they buy and lower prices for the things that they sell. Something should be done now. Unless that is done, Canadian agriculture will receive a slap such as it has never received in the history of the country.

On his return from Britain the Minister of Agriculture pointed out the difficulties both here and abroad. The wheat farmers and other farmers have a right to know to what extent the saving clause for 1948 and 1949, 1949 and 1950, in the British agreement, will be carried into effect. Except the Minister of Agriculture and possibly the members of the cabinet, no one knows what happened at the meetings with the British cabinet representatives. In the face of present threatening conditions in the world, as far as agriculture is concerned, and more particularly in Canada, an immediate statement should be made by the Minister of Agriculture—

Mr. Gardiner: If my hon. friend wants an immediate statement I am quite prepared to make it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am glad that we are to get that statement, and I trust that as soon as the minister gets the opportunity he will make it.

Mr. Gardiner: It would take only two minutes to make it now.

Mr. Diefenbaker: There are certain things the farmer wants. First and foremost he wants an immediate payment of the twenty-cent participation payment out of the moneys that are his for the wheat sold by the wheat board during the years 1945 to 1948. Second, he wants the Prairie Farm Assistance Act amended to remove the many injustices that today deny farmers fair and proper payments under this act. He wants the area of qualification immediately reduced.

Mention was made of irrigation—and that is one omission the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) could immediately answer.

Mr. Gardiner: Certainly.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I will give him a chance. Why is that omitted from the speech from the throne?—because, as I remember the Rosthern by-election, irrigation was one of the main promises dangled before the farmers of that constituency by my right hon. friend.

Mr. Gardiner: Items with regard to that have been in the estimates year by year for the last three years; and they will be in the estimates again this year.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Those items are for \$75,000, \$60,000 and \$130,000.

Mr. Gardiner: About \$2,500,000 last year.

Mr. Diefenbaker: All right; it will take only forty-five years, at that rate, to complete this particular irrigation project.

Mr. Gardiner: It was \$2,500,000 last year; I have not said what it will be this year.

Mr. Mitchell: You wanted an answer and you got it.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The people of the prairie provinces, in the areas where irrigation is so necessary to the preservation of their standard of living, require, not \$2 million set aside in the estimates each year, but an immediate commencement of this undertaking to the end that 500,000 to 1,000,000 acres will be rendered free from the danger of continued cyclical drought. This undertaking is omitted from the speech from the throne—and it means only one thing, that the promise of this undertaking made in the by-election in Rosthern is about as nebulous as some of the other promises made during that by-election campaign.

I come to income tax—and, in passing, let me say I am glad to see they are getting some reinforcements from some of the back-bench boys whose support for reductions has been characterized by silence for three years, but who now summon up that courage which is so evident in anticipation of a convention—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: —of an election. Yes, and conventions, too. They know they cannot win their conventions unless something is done about income tax.

I join with the western agricultural association which recently held a conference in Saskatchewan, upon which occasion they dealt among other questions with the injustices connected with the income tax administration. My leader, and those associated with him on this side of the house, have pointed out over and over again that a government collecting more than \$600 million from the people of Canada owed to the Canadian people a substantial reduction in income tax rate as well as an increase in exemptions. I would like some of those in bureaucratic control of government, and who occupy the towering seats of the mighty, to have a talk with farmers. They would learn of anomalies and injustices perpetrated in the operation of the