

Supply—Agriculture

always true to their duty, who will do it, I wonder. Mr. Chairman, I have waited a long time, I have waited patiently for months, after having been myself in certain offices in my riding, but all to no avail. As a matter of fact, it is always the same type of protectionist gimmick. That is the reason why I ask that an inquiry be held as regards the Farm Credit Corporation.

If the legislation is wrong, if it is not suitable to the province of Quebec, the minister should amend it. If the men there are inefficient, let us dismiss them and replace them by more responsible ones.

[Text]

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Chairman, it is always a pleasure for me, coming from such an agricultural riding, to have the opportunity to make some remarks on these estimates. I have appreciated listening to the complaints about the state of agriculture in rural Quebec. In the last day or two I spent some time looking at taxation statistics, and the records as they are available for 1960 and 1961 do reveal a dreadfully low state in that, in this huge province of Quebec, with all its cultivators and farmers, the actual taxes they pay are much less than are paid in the small and rather sparsely covered province, in terms of population, of Manitoba. Certainly I would add my pleas and those of my colleagues to encourage the minister to do something about this situation.

I want to concentrate mostly on some remarks the minister made on May 7 last in reply to what I thought was a well documented presentation in the sense that I understand documentation. The information was obviously recognizable to me and I am sure it was true. It was to the effect that, engendered by the Liberal party organization and working through the hon. member for Rosedale, the attempt is being made to ensure that in the field of legal patronage all government departments and agencies are forced to meet the requirement that friends of the government be favoured to the exclusion of others.

I want to put it to the minister that in replying to these comments of the hon. member for Yukon he did not in my view really get to the nub of the matter other than to give a general assurance that he wanted to cut out patronage in his department. He referred to the quality of the service and went on to say, as found on page 3025 of *Hansard*:

If the lawyers do not service them immediately and they have not got a real good excuse, then they are to be replaced. Everyone who has been appointed as a lawyer handling Farm Credit Cor-

poration loans has been instructed to do the work quickly. These are my instructions, and it must be done on merit, regardless of politics. My instructions are that no matter what a lawyer's politics are, if he cannot cut the mustard and service these loans for the farmers, then he is to be replaced. This will continue to be our policy.

That is excellent. I would say the minister would get almost unanimous support for that statement, except perhaps from some of the Neanderthal or dinosaur areas of the country. But this statement does not say a thing about the original appointments or whether there is a list of the appointments. It does not say anything about the trend I have heard remarked upon, and I think I can see it in my own area, the tendency for legal work of government agencies—I am not shocked that it is handled on a partisan basis—to be assigned more and more into fewer hands and for there to be a concentration in the cities and larger towns rather than in the smaller places. The minister should tell us whether his instructions are that lawyers are to be hired on the spot on the basis of their known ability rather than their political affiliation. I should like to know whether that is the overriding consideration. Otherwise it seems we are just going to get, if the minister carries out what he says he intends to, a long competing succession of inefficient Liberal lawyers being replaced by other Liberal lawyers.

It has always seemed a travesty to me that the legal profession, which takes such tremendous pride in its accomplishments and what it can do, is in a sense the last bastion of patronage in this country and in a sense it provides the skeleton, if you will, for political parties.

Now, it seems to me that the tie that binds the lawyers to patronage is a very simple one. It is money. It is a gross material interest. I am not going to condemn them for that. However, they have a special position. One of the things that bothers me is that very often what prompts a lawyer to be partisan is that when the party gets into power he gets these sinecures, in a sense, cinch money for carrying out the little chores provided by government agencies.

One of the ironies I have always felt, and I know some of my colleagues who are lawyers are going to object, is that it seems to me it is usually the poorer lawyers of the community who feel it is necessary to get these sinecures, who become the party hacks and so, after an election when the party has been successful they get into that long line-up for judicial appointments and appointments to commissions of inquiry. The minister, in this particular area, sounded to me like a