

Interim Supply

I would be the first to admit that there have been difficult times in the farming communities over the past few years. There have been some substantial changes in prices although some have been upward as well as downward. Farming in the last five years has been the same as farming has been over a great many years; namely there is always an uncertainty about it. There is always that constant worry about weather and markets, and farmers are doing their best to overcome the latter and of course we have to rely on Providence with regard to the former. But that is not unusual, sir.

What is unusual and what governments must always bear in mind is that demands for food change from day to day; that the little turkey coming in from the United States today is an element of trade that has developed in the last year and a half or two years; that the demand for small fowl of all kinds is a taste which the Canadian housewife has just developed over the last four or five years in most cases; and that farming has to be alive to these changes and must make the change in order to meet the competition and get the market. When there is a temporary adjustment of one kind or another there is bound to be a little difficulty over a period of months or even years until we find our way out of that particular problem.

To go back to basic factors. The only difference of opinion I find in the farm community with the policies we follow at the moment has to do generally with the argument about parity or non-parity. We have been through that already and I do not intend to cover the ground again. However, I find that farmers—at least in that part of the country I represent—have a very distinct recollection of two things; namely that in the over-all picture unless you imposed a complete ban on imports into Canada—and no one has recommended that, not even my friend the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe who asked so that it will appear on the record a question about importing some beef when he knows perfectly well that we import beef into Canada in cans because the Canadian housewife wants to buy it that way—and so I say no one has suggested to me that we should have a complete ban on imports. Therefore, the price of Canadian farm produce year after year is a reflection to some extent of competition on the United States side.

I have not looked at the figures lately—I was not in the chamber the other evening when the Minister of Agriculture spoke—but I would imagine that at the present time the record shows that in almost every case comparable prices show that the Canadian price is higher than the United States price.

If that is so it seems to me that the policy that is best suited for the Canadian agriculturists at the moment is that we should have good support prices, that we should have a live active organization for the farm movement for the purposes of finding and improving their markets and that the best that the government can do—and in fact the best the government should do—is to maintain support prices at proper levels and where there has been a change in trade and where circumstances have been altered—as everyone, I think, admits they were altered—as in the potato market in the last few years, the government should take appropriate action when there seems to be almost unanimous consent by the producers as to what they want. This is the policy we have followed certainly in the last three or four years. I know that since I have been Minister of Finance we have made three changes in the tariff on farm products and I think everyone recognizes that this was done at the request of the farm organizations and I believe with the unanimous approval of this house.

With the greatest respect I would like to say to the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe that when he looks at this side and speaks about tired old men I think he is just living back in the thirties and has never got over it since.

Mr. Nicholson: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe always receives a very good hearing in the house. However, he was not quite able to repair the damage today which he did to his leader a few days ago when the hon. member asked the Prime Minister about plans for a future conference of commonwealth prime ministers. The Leader of the Opposition was red in the face when this very embarrassing question was asked by the senior member of the Progressive Conservative party. It was pretty obvious that it had not occurred to the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe that the Leader of the Opposition by any stretch of the imagination might be the Prime Minister of Canada after the next election.

Mr. Monteith: Oh, come on; get down to facts.

Mr. Lennard: Stop wasting time.

Mr. Nicholson: I think we wasted enough time when the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe was speaking.

Mr. Lennard: You wasted more than enough time on divorce bills during the last six weeks.

Mr. Nicholson: I suggest to the hon. member who is making these interruptions that he should get up on his feet and make some constructive suggestions. I submit that the