

Supply—Agriculture

done. These are the courses that we have mapped out. Our objective is unchanged, namely to raise agriculture and the other economies of our country to a level in keeping with the general situation prevailing within our country and internationally.

Today the hon. member grudgingly admitted—I think it was a grudging admission, by his attitude and his manner of speech—that last year as a result of a vigorous export policy by the Department of Trade and Commerce Canadian exports of wheat rose to 317 million bushels, the highest in five years, at a time when other exporting nations had experienced major declines in their sales.

These are some of the things that we have been able to achieve in a matter of 15 months or slightly more, during a portion of which time we were absent from our duties because of an election campaign. These are some of the things which we have done. I set out the plan for the future and the course to be followed at the election as we proceeded step by step, and in the meantime made provision to assist, in particular, the small farmers by payments as provided in the estimates now before us.

I listened with interest, also, to the Leader of the Opposition. He dealt with agricultural matters. He spoke of the cost-price squeeze. I do not seem to remember that at any time when he was in a position to do something on behalf of western farmers or on behalf of farmers in general across Canada he showed anything like the enthusiasm which he is displaying today. We talk about promises. I have some here. These are the agricultural promises made by the hon. gentleman in his speeches across the country, things which could have been done, action which could have been taken during the years in which the government to which he belonged was in power. During all those years we asked for some action. Today when action is being taken and when a course is being followed which will bring about the rehabilitation of agriculture to a state which it has not enjoyed in recent years, the answer given by the hon. gentleman is that from the paper from which he quotes so frequently, or from the group of advisers who served him so ill only a few months ago by the advice they gave him then. It is an interesting attitude, the one shown by the hon. gentleman. He is ambidexterous, if I may use that expression. He says: "Oh, it is \$40 million, but it is not worth while considering; it has no principle."

The principle was set forth by the Minister of Agriculture, and I set it forth the other day. It is a provision that is meant to meet an immediate situation. The amount in question is, as I stated the other day, more than the

amount which for so many years represented the request on the part of hon. members of the C.C.F., the amount that would have to be paid into wheat board funds in order to secure for the farmer under a two-price system a fair and proper return for that portion of his wheat production which is used in Canada.

We have taken this step. We intend to carry out by gradual stages a policy to bring about the achievement of that which we advocated through the years. My friend the hon. member for Assiniboia talks about marches on Ottawa. That is something he has been trying to get the farmers to do for months. I have read the speeches he made out there. He called on the western farmers to march on Ottawa and they told him to march back to Ottawa by himself. All over western Canada he has been bringing about that new form of democracy that consists in having the farmers march. He spoke about it again today. He said the \$200 could be used by the average farmer to buy a return ticket.

Mr. Argue: It was the second vice-president of the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union who made that statement.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The hon. gentleman has been able to produce one or two but he has not been too successful on the whole. He went out to western Canada. He talked to the farmers and urged them to march. "On to Ottawa!" was his cry, but he came back by himself.

Mr. Chairman, this is part of an agricultural policy designed, as the Minister of Agriculture said a moment ago, to meet an immediate situation. When the next session arrives we intend to introduce a measure for which the farmers have asked from the earliest days in western Canada, something which has also been requested by farmers in other parts of Canada, an insurance plan to bring about the assurance of at least a modicum of income, that degree of income which will not cost the farmer too much to assure himself of, and through which during the dark days of drought the farmer may be assured of at least a fair and reasonable rate of return. That is one of the things that came about under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. That met the situation in the western provinces to a degree. That legislation was placed on the statute books as a result of the initiative of the Right Hon. J. G. Gardiner. It has been expanded, it has served a successful purpose and has been beneficial. Farmers generally are today asking for something further in that direction and it is because they are asking