

Agreements Respecting Marginal Lands

not think that by the introduction of this measure they are going to satisfy the farmers who today are concerned about their income position.

This, like the other legislation introduced by this government before Christmas, is designed in principle to meet the long term need. It overlooks, it evades the present situation. The legislation respecting vocational training, the legislation with regard to small business and the establishment of a productivity council—these were measures introduced by the government prior to Christmas—were all long term in their effects. But hon. gentlemen opposite sought in their design to give the impression to the Canadian people that the government had embarked on a vigorous campaign to alleviate unemployment conditions in our country.

Now, again today, this government by royal commission, this government of procrastination, ineptness and postponement, seeks to convey to the Canadian farmers as it did to the Canadian industrial worker, that it is going to meet their problems by introducing something which has all the earmarks of full acceptability but which is not designed, as the minister's own words indicate, to cope with the actual conditions confronting the Canadian farmer.

I again offer the hon. gentleman my congratulations on being named Minister of Agriculture. I had hoped he would have been able in the first instance to address himself immediately to the crisis currently confronting the farmers of Canada. Since he has not done that, he may be assured that this measure, to the extent that it will help in meeting the problems facing the farmers of Canada in the long term, will receive our full support. But as one who represents in this house many farmers I deplore and regret that once again we are going to be given, this time through the new Minister of Agriculture, a further demonstration of the government's utter incapacity to meet the problems facing the Canadian people.

Mr. Charlton: Would the hon. member for Essex East permit a question? Did the federal Department of Agriculture between the years 1935 and 1957, during which years the hon. member for Essex East was a member of the government, ever assist the soil survey work carried out for 30 years by the department of agriculture in Ontario?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The hon. member, who does me the favour of saying I was a member of the government for all that length of time, has been in this house for about as long as I have, and I should not need to have to remind him that no one has made a greater contribution to agriculture, ministerially, than

the former minister of agriculture who had the responsibility, for example, of administering P.F.R.A. With regard to soil studies, would the hon. member deny that the federal government did assist the province of Ontario in studies of the very kind to which he is referring. Would he deny that the agricultural school at Ste. Anne de Bellevue—

Some hon. Members: Answer the question.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am answering the question. Would he deny that assistance was given—Mr. Chairman, you must restrict these primitives here who will not enable me to make a reply. I would also answer the question by saying that soil studies—the former government authorized studies to be made by the agricultural college at Ste. Anne de Bellevue for the purpose of finding out more about soil. Indeed, the federal government under Mr. St. Laurent and Mackenzie King made all sorts of grants to all sorts of bodies for this and for other studies.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): I understood the hon. gentleman to say that P.F.R.A. was started by the former minister of agriculture and I should like to correct the record on that point—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I did not say that. I recognize that an earlier minister of agriculture, Mr. Weir, was among those responsible for its origin, along with Mr. Thompson and a Mr. Spence, a former member of parliament. But in any event the main administration, the real foundation for P.F.R.A. was the responsibility of the government of Mackenzie King and St. Laurent and the administration was carried out by Mr. James Gardiner.

Mr. Argue: I listened with a great deal of interest to the statement of the Minister of Agriculture. Certainly all members of the house will support any program, no matter how long term its nature, which promises to bring some measure of stability to the agriculture industry. The whole question of conservation of land and water use, rural redevelopment and so on is something which has occupied the minds of former governments, all members of this house and all members of the other place for a long time, and we shall await with interest the development of any program directed towards this laudable objective.

The statement made by the Minister of Agriculture this afternoon was very wordy. It contained a lot of fine phraseology, but I think it lacked any great substance and failed to throw any very clear light on what the government is, in fact, proposing to do.