

Grain—Deficiency Payments

Mr. Pearson: Where is the program?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Where is the program, my leader asks.

Mr. Fraser: We will show you.

Now the farm union has representatives in this city at the present time. I understand that they have seen the administration, that they have called on various members of parliament, that they have put forward their points of view, and that the nature of their grievance, as stated by the hon. member for Assiniboia, is that in the light of the assurances given by this government in the elections of 1957 and 1958, and in the light of the assurances given by the administration when this group called on them in the month of May, that we and they are now entitled to ask of the government, so many weeks after they first met with the administration, what is the policy of the government with regard to deficiency payments as asked for by the group that called on the administration only a few days ago and in the month of May?

Mr. Pallett: Isn't there a rule against repetition?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The hon. member for Assiniboia asked us what was our attitude with regard to this problem. Our attitude has been declared; it is on the record and is represented by years of fruitful Liberal administration on behalf of Canadian agriculture. And while it may be in the hands of hon. gentlemen to criticize the agricultural policy of the previous administration, the fact is that the record of achievement of the former government toward all sections of agriculture is such as to compare favourably with the policies of this administration and, from all indications, with all future policies of the present treasury benches.

We believe on this side, as a statement of principle, that we should maintain and extend the system of support prices and deficiency payments where appropriate, administered in such a way as to obtain for farmers for their products prices bearing a fair relationship to their costs of production and designed to ensure to farmers a fair share of the national income and encourage the production of marketable farm products.

An hon. Member: Where did you copy that from?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is copied from the national Liberal convention which, earlier than you think, will give us the next prime minister of Canada.

Mr. Pallett: Did the hon. member mention the year 2000?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): What about the convention policies that led to the election of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker)? Where is the implementation of that policy and that program?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I ask my hon. friends to compare the inaction of this government now with the kind of demands made by hon. gentlemen opposite when they sat on this side of the house. I do not refer only to deficiency payments. What about the other points put forward by the farmers' union in the month of May and referred to again the other day? They called upon the government to establish an adequate farm credit system under the Department of Agriculture to handle all the types of farm credit that are needed. They asked for the accumulating, as quickly as possible, of adequate data on the cost of production of farm products in order that the price stabilization board may have authentic statistics available as a basis for implementing the provisions of the price support legislation.

How often have we heard the present Prime Minister speak of trying to bring about some government policy that would result in a yield to the farmers in proportion at least to the cost of production, and how often did he urge the government of the day to establish some system through the research bureau in the Department of Agriculture or in the Department of Trade and Commerce, in collaboration with the universities, by which a better appreciation of the factors of the cost of production of agricultural commodities might be better ascertained?

The hon. member who just spoke a few moments ago, if I understood him correctly, said he was at a loss to understand fully how one could arrive at what the cost of production would be with regard to the growing of wheat. If that is the case—and the hon. gentleman I take it is an experienced farmer—I ask him, then, will he not join with us in asking the government to implement this particular request of the farmers' union so that we can have some appreciation of the authentic statistics available as a basis for implementing the provisions of the price support legislation?

If the government finds that one of the reasons why it cannot announce this deficiency payment policy is because it has not at its disposal the necessary facts to ascertain what is the cost of production, then I would ask the Minister of Trade and Commerce why he and his colleagues did not take that position when they sat on this side of the house asking the government of the day for measures that would relieve the economic pressure which confronted not only western farmers but farmers all over Canada.