

*Supply—Agriculture*

member for Burnaby-Coquitlam. I do not believe the minister is a native of Saskatchewan any more than I am. I understand he was born in that little farming settlement of Kenora, Ontario.

**Mr. Regier:** I saw him there in 1938.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** He has been in Saskatchewan quite a long time, just as some others who were not actually born on the western prairies have spent a lot of time there. The Russell newspaper, the *Banner*, in its issue of February 23, contained this article under the heading "Selling Mr. Hamilton". I do not suppose it was really suggested that there was any reintroduction of slavery; I suppose they were using the word "selling" in that modern sense of Madison avenue and not in the old-fashioned sense of the Louisiana slave market. I quote:

Surpluses would soon vanish if the federal minister of agriculture put as much effort into selling farm produce as he does in selling Mr. Hamilton to the public. As though he didn't get enough press releases from various government departments, Mr. Hamilton has hired himself a special editorial writer to build up an efficient, high pressure and extensive public relations and information service. And we in the newspaper field are feeling the effects already, for there is hardly a mail coming in without one or more releases from his information service, which often include a text of one of his speeches. All have that stereotype beginning "Agricultural Minister Alvin Hamilton said today." One would need a fair sized daily to relay all the material to the public. Offhand, we would say that 25 mimeographed pages are received each week and multiply this by some 800 weeklies in Canada, as well as dailies, radio and T.V. stations, and you have a lot of paper. No wonder we all have such big waste paper baskets.

Perhaps that would explain the minister's new policy on planting trees. If this proliferation of press releases is going to continue at the rate that, according to these writers, it has already reached since he became minister, he may feel that the existing crop of spruce trees in the country will not produce enough paper for all his press releases and therefore we must increase the production of wood in order to produce the necessary paper and thereby produce a crop that will not be in surplus.

The minister was not here, of course, but I remember the days when the minister's friends were over here where I am now and there was no theme on which Mr. Drew, the former leader of the party, and other members spent more time than the extravagance of the previous Liberal government in its information services in the various departments. Promises were made in those days that when the Conservatives came into office they would fire all these publicity people, get down to the business of dealing with the problems of the country and let their solution of the problems speak for itself.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

That does not seem to have been the practice that has been followed in many departments but I do not think there is any department where there has been such a conspicuous increase in the crop as in the minister's department where, notwithstanding some of the other undisposible surpluses, I have no doubt that from the look of things it will not be too long until the biggest agricultural surplus will be the surplus of the minister's press releases and other propoganda of one kind and another. Apart from any harvest of votes the minister expects to get out of these press releases, which is hardly a legitimate expenditure of the funds of the Department of Agriculture, it did seem to me that he should explain to the committee precisely what advantage he thinks the farmers get from seeing his picture in this information bulletin which, according to this story, was formerly a compilation of technical information of one sort and another.

I think he should explain just what justification there is for this proliferation of propoganda and expenditure because it does seem to me that we have enough real problems that should engage the full time and attention of ministers instead of their indulging in this practice of building up huge propoganda machines with the avowed purpose or at any rate the apparent purpose—perhaps the minister would not avow it—of political self-glorification. I felt that perhaps the minister had been so busy issuing these things, so busy making these speeches and had spent so much time on the road that he had not had much time to read the newspapers to see what kind of reception his road show was getting and that perhaps it would be helpful to him if this were drawn to his attention. I may say that these are just a few random samples and I could produce many more if it would not weary the committee and take up time unnecessarily.

I know that the minister should not be expected to give an answer when he replies on item No. 1 with respect to another matter about which I should like him to give the committee some information. However, I felt that I might give the minister notice now so that when the appropriate item is reached—I think the matter will perhaps come under the P.F.R.A. item—he can give us a progress report as to water control on the Fairford river in Manitoba. There was an order in council passed on October 28 last, a copy of which I have in my hand, setting out the basis on which the government of Canada is undertaking this work as part of the over-all flood control program, I understand, in Manitoba.

If I understand the situation correctly, and the minister can correct me immediately if I