

Supply—Agriculture

Mr. Stanfield: They are here to work, to account to the people of Canada only three days a week, and sometimes not even that. With regard to the markets for grain there have been some very disturbing developments. I have already pointed out the fact that our share of world markets has been going down. Second, and potentially of very grave importance, is the fact that countries which might be counted as new markets for Canadian production have revolutionized their own production. That is the striking case in Asia. This year there has been a record production of wheat and rice throughout Asia.

Let us consider India as an example. The total food grain crop in India is officially estimated at 100 million tons this year. This is 32 per cent above the level of last year and is a very fortunate development for that great country. But the startling statistic in India is that this year total food grain crop production is fully 12 per cent above the previous record. This may be in part due to the weather, but Canada and Canadians will be hiding in a fool's paradise if they fail to recognize the tremendous impact of technology upon the capacity of Asia to produce cereals. Farm practices there have improved. This is a great thing. There have been great improvements in the effectiveness and availability of fertilizer, and new high-yielding cereals like the new varieties of wheat from Mexico have changed the future of agriculture in Asia. Therefore they have a profound effect on our future. We are in danger of losing some of our traditional markets and face the prospect of new markets becoming more difficult.

The government has revealed no plan to meet this serious, long term market problem. It is not even showing any awareness that it exists. The minister this morning, and again this afternoon, stated that there would be a Canadian conference on agriculture in March. When I had a previous responsibility a former minister of agriculture told me two or three years ago there would be a Canadian conference on agriculture. Some two years later the minister says it will be held in March.

Mr. Olson: You now have the date.

Mr. Stanfield: Yes, we have the date after two years of talking about it.

Mr. Olson: I have not been minister that long.

Mr. Stanfield: We have a few details, but it appears that the conference will be little

[Mr. Olson.]

more than an expansion of the ministerial conference on agriculture which has been held every year. Of course, it will be larger. I think there are one or two every serious weaknesses about this conference. In the first place, agricultural producers themselves may be forced to take a back seat at the conference. About one-third of the 400 or so people who will attend will represent producer groups, but the minister has said there will not be a single representative of the producer groups on the steering committee.

Mr. Olson: There is one.

Mr. Stanfield: I am glad to be corrected.

Mr. Horner: There is not a representative of the producer groups.

Mr. Stanfield: The minister can correct me after I have finished if what I say is wrong. I hope I am wrong in this regard. The minister says he has invited the National Farmers' Union and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to designate one delegate between them. But he knew full well when he made that request that it would be difficult and unlikely that these two producer groups would agree on a nominee. They have nominated one each, and as I understand it the minister decided to accept neither. Again, I hope I am wrong.

Mr. Olson: You are right now. You cannot accept two nominees for one position.

Mr. Horner: Why don't you make another position?

Mr. Stanfield: If this is the minister's approach to the problems of agriculture, that he cannot accept two delegates from producer groups because he has established only one position, God help the farmers of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I am afraid that unfortunately this is typical of the government's habit of ignoring the producer groups on agricultural matters. There are other weaknesses in a conference of this kind. Certainly it is just not enough. We have serious problems in Canada, of course, and we also have great and grave problems outside Canada concerning markets. I believe the situation is serious enough to warrant Canada taking the lead in initiating a world wide investigation of crop and market prospects in the next decade, an investigation, perhaps a conference, which will involve all the countries of the world including, of course,