

Supply—Agriculture

this morning the hon. member for Waterloo South, representing as he does an eastern Canada agricultural riding, might have referred to eastern agriculture during the course of his remarks. But he did not do so. He joined with previous speakers on the government side in boasting of the government's record. He talked about the issue of cabinet solidarity with reference to the speech of the minister in Regina, and he made some snide remarks about lawyers and their opinions on the issue of cabinet solidarity.

In so far as he raised that issue, may I say, as a member of the profession to which he referred, that in my opinion the rejection by the Prime Minister of the remarks made by the Minister of Agriculture was in itself a shocking example of a breach of cabinet solidarity as we know it. The hon. member for Waterloo South, instead of dealing with problems in eastern agriculture, spoke instead about the greatness of the Minister of Agriculture and his program, particularly in respect to his efforts on behalf of the western farmers. Again, instead of dealing with the problems of eastern agriculture, the hon. member for Waterloo South in fact made an admission that the wheat deal, as it is called, with China was a windfall for this government. This, of course, is contrary to what we have heard over the last few years from the Minister of Agriculture and his supporters in the government.

This debate has ranged over some three days now, and while the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Assiniboia and members of the Liberal party have referred to some of the problems of the farmers of eastern Canada, as I have said, Mr. Chairman, it is rather disturbing to note that the Minister of Agriculture and his supporters have not found time to make reference in this debate to these very serious matters which affect the farmers of eastern Canada. This is to be expected, of course, particularly when we refer back to the record of this government and to the attitudes taken by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture. To them and to this government the farming industry apparently ends at the head of the great lakes; anything easterly from the head of the great lakes is apparently not worthy of time or energy. How far this attitude has extended can be seen in the remarks of the Prime Minister in the debate in reply to the speech from the throne, when he placed such emphasis on the support the Conservative party had received from western farmers.

Mr. Chairman, I mention this because I have a particular interest in western Canada. I was born on a farm in Saskatchewan and spent the first half of my life on a farm

in Saskatchewan. Whatever degree of success western farmers may have attained at this time is most certainly heartening to us all; but the fact remains that a party which strives for national support and which calls itself a national party must surely be a party that does not rely to such a great extent on sectional or regional support. It seems that a party which calls itself a national party should have consideration for, and should take effective steps to deal with, the problems of the agriculture industry on a nation-wide basis, and thereby give some hope and encouragement to the farmers of eastern Canada. The Minister of Agriculture, both during the campaign and in the weeks thereafter, assured eastern farmers that, having solved all the problems of the west and placed the western agriculturists on a level of unprecedented prosperity and in a position where they could look to a picture of unclouded prosperity in the future, he would shortly be ready to devote his unmatched ability and devotion to the cause of agriculture almost exclusively for the good of Canadians engaged in that industry in eastern Canada. As the hon. member for Assiniboia said this morning, having in effect made this promise or representation to the farmers of eastern Canada, that he would now turn his attention to their needs, the Minister of Agriculture subsequently, it would appear, has threatened eastern farmers that unless something is done with respect to the dairy problem, he is going to cut the supports out from under them.

Since the minister has given that assurance to the eastern farmers, nothing constructive has been done. He has made a threat and given a time limit to the dairy industry to correct the overproduction of butter or to suffer the consequences. His department has given the dairy industry no guidance in this connection other than the rather overly simple and consequently very impractical suggestion of shifting from dairy to beef production.

As has been pointed out by Dr. H. L. Patterson of the Ontario department of agriculture, farmers are still paying interest rates of 18 per cent, within a range of 12 per cent to 24 per cent, on the greater proportion of their borrowing. This high cost of credit prevents many farmers from turning to beef production, because of the substantial capital outlays involved.

When a farmer switches from dairy production to beef production he will need double the amount of land and twice as many cows in order to maintain the same income he previously enjoyed. The Ontario department of agriculture estimates the cash yield per beef cow at \$109 annually compared with \$240 per cow, including the value of the calf, for