

## Supply—Agriculture

in full because I think here again this newspaper is reporting what the public, and at least this newspaper, think about statements the minister makes at some of these meetings. It is headed, "Mr. Gardiner Figures Again", and reads:

The federal Minister of Agriculture seems absolutely determined, at any cost to his own reputation, to misrepresent the true state of the wheat farmers' income. Speaking to the western Canada fair association's annual meeting in Winnipeg earlier this week, Mr. Gardiner paraded an armful of arguments that could only be designed to mislead his audience.

The income figures he quoted were for all farmers in Canada. The argument is about the income of the prairie wheat farmers. By including a large body of people not included by anyone else, Mr. Gardiner fortifies his argument. But this alone is not enough to indicate that the income of the wheat farmer has not shrunk. So Mr. Gardiner figures in five year averages, and says that, on the average, farmers in Canada have been more prosperous in the past five years than they were during the previous five years.

This, of course, is simply a gimmick. Averages cover enormous variations. Mr. Gardiner's broad sweep of averages cloaks the whole point: which is that for the last two years farmers have been much harder up on the prairies than they were for many years before. This is an incontrovertible fact. Mr. Gardiner's figures do not attempt the impossible and deny it. They are just chosen to cover it up.

The liberties taken by the minister are so flagrant that they have drawn formal criticism from people who have historically been friendly to him. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, in annual meeting in Hamilton, on Thursday passed a resolution criticizing the speech; their resolution pointed out that from 1951 to 1955 the cash income of farmers has declined by \$480 million, their net income by \$700 million. And they charge Mr. Gardiner with leaving an "entirely erroneous impression with the public." It is to be hoped that rebuke from this source will at last show Mr. Gardiner that he is beating his head on a brick wall.

I think that pretty well answers the statement, if there had been any confusion before. The fact is that farm income has dropped and farm costs have continued to rise. I wish to quote the closing sentence of an article that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* of December 3, 1955, which states:

For every dollar of actual cash income that the farmer had in 1951, in 1954 he had only 60 cents.

These figures illustrate exactly the price squeeze which is developing each day in western Canada and making it more difficult for the farmer. There must be farmers throughout Canada who are likewise feeling the financial pinch. We of this party do not want policies only for western Canada. We think we must have policies which will embrace the whole Canadian farm economy. While I am dealing specifically with the situation in western Canada, I think it is one which reflects the whole Canadian farm income.

I hold in my hand figures taken from the dominion bureau of statistics record which indicate that while the national income increased from 1930 to 1939, and again from 1946 to 1954, the share of the national income going to the agriculturists or farmers lessened in that period. We find that in the period 1951-1954 the farmer's share of the national income dropped so rapidly that in 1954 it was a mere 5.6 per cent, which was even smaller than the average figure in the depressed 1930's.

I hold in my hand a clipping from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, which deals with some of the farmers' problems. The article is entitled "Squeezing the Farmer". It deals in particular with some of the farmer's costs and refers to him having to pay one-third more on certain items than formerly because of tariff regulations and classifications. It illustrates that in tariff board rulings there is often more than one interpretation and consequently, as it states here, the tough interpretation is to be preferred. It would seem that is the way they operate. The article goes on to point out:

Sales of parts in Manitoba in 1954 dropped by 12 per cent from the 1953 figure; parts sales in Saskatchewan dropped by 30 per cent.

The reference is to machinery repairs and parts. In that connection I may say that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, as reported in the wheat pool report of January, 1956, asks that tariffs be cut on certain items the farmer must buy. It includes in the article a list of products on which it feels the tariff should be taken off.

The situation in respect of the whole western economy is getting worse. It is affecting our merchants, our retail sales trade and also the livelihood of the people. I hold in my hand an article from the *Journal*, dated August 15, 1955, dealing with the falling sales of farm machinery. This article states:

In 1954 sales of all farm implements across Canada dropped 38 per cent, or more than \$92 million. Even the sales of repair parts were down 14 per cent, an even surer indication that farmers are pressed for ready cash.

In reference to Saskatchewan it says:

For instance Saskatchewan sales last year dropped by more than one-half, Alberta's by 45 per cent.

Hon. members who are not acquainted with conditions pertaining to western agriculture in particular can understand why some of us are very disturbed about the cost-price squeeze facing the western farmer. As I said at the beginning, we in this group have fought in the past and shall fight in the future for Canadian national agricultural policies which will have adequate parity prices for all the