

Supply—Agriculture

pay compensation to farmers whose animals are destroyed because of rabies? I understand that some time ago there was an outbreak of rabies in various provinces in Canada and by order in council compensation was paid on the basis of the federal, provincial and municipal governments co-operating. Since then in my own particular area one or two animals have died and no compensation has been forthcoming. It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that this is unjust. Simply because no epidemic is raging at the particular time certain people suffer losses, they should not be denied compensation. Farmers are quite co-operative with the federal Department of Agriculture. Indeed, they are quite enthusiastic about the help they receive. I think it would build up confidence on the part of the farmers if such legislation were forthcoming. Will the minister inform the committee in the course of his reply.

Mr. Pickersgill: Before the item carries, and since I do not think it would be appropriate on any other item, I wish to put one or two queries to the minister to give him the opportunity to explain to us what is happening with respect to the view of one correspondent who described the minister as doing political farming. Perhaps I can make my point clear by reading this piece from the *Victoria Daily Times* of January 17, by a very distinguished member of the press gallery, Mr. Tom Gould, which is entitled "Political Farming":

Agriculture Minister Alvin Hamilton has a decided advantage over opposition critics of the government's farm program. Since taking over the agriculture portfolio, the minister has discovered a way of using the taxpayer's own money to distribute what amounts to political propaganda. The information division of the department has for a number of years been producing a twice-monthly publication entitled "Farm News", that is sent to every newspaper and radio station in Canada. In the past, ministers left it alone. It was a purely departmental publication, dealing in matters of concern to Canada's farming population.

It carried articles on the control of wild oats, on the use of chemical fertilizers, and a wide range of problems studied by the labs and experimental farms operated by the government.

Mr. Hamilton has decided to take advantage of this publication to spread the government's views on agriculture. He made his debut as a columnist in the current issue, on the highly-controversial subject of allowing feed mills to purchase grain directly from producers without first obtaining delivery quotas from the Canadian wheat board.

The column bears his picture, and is titled: "The Minister Reports."

Officials of the information division have been informed that the minister intends providing them with a similar column once a month to start, and may step it up to twice-a-month to make sure he gets in every issue. His first effort takes up one sixth of the print space in the current issue.

It is an out-and-out defence of the government's action in the feed mills controversy, and a denial of the claims made by critics of the action.

People close to Mr. Hamilton say the use of what was a purely departmental information outlet is

but one of the first steps towards becoming what the minister describes as "the most political agricultural minister Canada has ever known."

One of his first moves on taking office was to set up a "political file" in his office, something that didn't exist under former minister Doug Harkness, who is now Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Hamilton obviously plans to spend far more time out on the road, convincing farmers they have never had it better, than in sitting in Ottawa running the department. He has made a dozen major policy speeches.

This emphasis on the political aspects of agriculture is readily understandable. The Tories currently have a solid hold on the prairies,—

Well, I think some of us would question that.

—and they want to retain that hold in the next federal election.

I now turn to the *Winnipeg Free Press* of February 18, and to a report by Mr. Victor Mackie, a respected member of the press gallery, and an exceptionally well-informed one, who seems to be able to get advance information about the reports of royal commissions, who had this to say:

Agriculture Minister Hamilton is out to build up an efficient, high pressure and extensive public relations and information service for his department. He wants more publicity for his policies.

He has hired on a contract basis an editorial writer from the *Toronto Telegram*, Harry Halliwell, for six months to do the job of rebuilding the agriculture department's publicity agencies.

We all recognize, of course that the *Toronto Telegram* is a leading agriculture journal in an agriculture area of the country, and no doubt that would fit one of their editorial writers specially for this function. I continue:

Mr. Halliwell has obtained leave of absence from his newspaper.

That would not surprise anybody who is aware of the very close relations, not entirely agricultural, between that newspaper and the government.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Halliwell also used to write for the *Star-Phoenix* in Saskatoon.

Mr. Pickersgill: He may have written for the *Star-Phoenix* in Saskatoon—

Mr. Jones: As an editorial writer.

Mr. Pickersgill: —as an editorial writer, but I do not know that that would necessarily qualify him, any more than would writing for the *Toronto Telegram* as an expert on publicity for the Department of Agriculture. I continue with the quotation:

Also, at the minister's suggestion, the Canadian wheat board has hired Ralph Hedlin, a free lance writer in Winnipeg, on a contract basis, to act as a part-time public relations man for the board.

I now turn to the *Russell Banner*, published in Russell, Manitoba, a province quite near to the one in which the minister lives. Incidentally, perhaps I ought to correct what I believe was a misstatement by the hon.