

*Supply—Agriculture*

the British market. It is for that reason I made the suggestion many times that members of this government, particularly members of this cabinet, are paying more attention to politics than they are to the country. It has been said often that only big men will admit mistakes. This government has no agriculture policy. It just has a carpetbag appeal to various sections of the country. Apparently when ministers are going to visit various sections of the country they grab the bag for that particular section and go and make their speech. What a grab bag that is. One thing is quite clear: politics is always uppermost in their minds.

Now, we have the famous cheese import fiasco of last year. I notice it is one o'clock, Mr. Chairman.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

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#### AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

**Mr. Charlton:** Mr. Chairman, at one o'clock I had just mentioned the cheese imports of 1955. I should like to go back for a moment to another matter which must be interpreted as government policy. I refer to a statement issued by the Minister of Agriculture in the dominion-provincial agricultural conference in 1953. I should like to quote a statement that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* of November 25, as follows:

And most of Canada's surplus wheat still will go to Britain. Some might argue that Canada no longer has any large market in Britain. "But you can say," Mr. Gardiner told the delegates, "that we have the biggest market we've ever had in Britain."

Mr. Gardiner felt that the best answer to questions raised at the conference "is to go out and produce what you are best able to produce."

It is obvious that at that time this government was paying no attention to any increase in surpluses. They said to the farmers: "Go out and produce what you are best able to produce". Apparently that has been the attitude right straight through.

With regard to the cheese imports last year, in the face of a terrific job being done by the Ontario cheese producers to try and market their own cheese and to keep their own domestic prices up to the reasonable figure of 30 cents, we were told at that time that we must buy cheese or some product from New Zealand to help keep our trade in balance with that country. I should like to ask the minister why it is that the farmer always has to bear the brunt of those trade balances? We buy on the protected market and we sell on the open market.

This morning I made some reference to income, and I should like to add just a word to it at this time. It appears obvious now that the minister has come up with another gimmick. It is not a new one. But if his figures were true this morning, and if he had found them soon enough he might not have had to go back five years to get the average farm income. The minister has been doing that ever since 1951 and 1952. I do not think it is fair to go back and pick out the good year of 1951 to calculate farmers' income.

In 1952 he took the 2-year average; in 1953, the 3-year average; in 1954, the 4-year average; and this year, the 5-year average. I wonder how long the minister is going to have to keep on doing that? I assume until another good year, and then he will stop and take that year alone. You know, Mr. Chairman, it reminds me of a man who has had a bleeding attack. He does not lose much blood the first day, a little more the second, third and fourth day, but on the fifth day the minister comes along and, since the average for the five days is not great, he says: "You are O.K.; you do not need any attention".

I hold in my hand a copy of the *Economic Annalist* of December, 1955, volume No. 6. I should like to quote figures on farm prices. In 1951, the index stood at 296.8; in 1952, 274.4; in 1953, 250.4; in 1954, 233.4. There was a steady decline. The monthly figure is given up to only September, 1955, in this issue. If you calculate the average for each month you will arrive at an average figure of 225.8 for 1955, so that there is a decrease from 253.4 to 225.8 in 1955. The consumer price index has risen from 113.7 to 116.8, and the commodities and services used by farmers, the composite, has increased from 230 to 241.3. That gives the story in a nutshell that the farmer is not as well off now as he was a few years ago. As Dr. Hannam of the federation of agriculture says, he is back practically to where he was in 1940.

I have another interesting figure on floor prices. First of all, there are the non-agricultural subsidies, and then the agricultural subsidies cost. All I am going to do is to give the figures of the percentage of these total subsidies. These are taken from the dominion bureau of statistics. Mind you, this is not the total money paid out to various people, but is what is regarded as a strict subsidy. The percentage of subsidies paid to agriculture in the year 1946 was 44 per cent of the total. In the year 1947, 36 per cent; in 1948, 44 per cent; in 1949, 37 per cent; in 1950, 53 per cent; in 1951, 74 per cent; in 1952, 64 per cent; in 1953, 58 per cent; in