

Agreements Respecting Marginal Lands

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. member's question directed toward the exercise of the prerogative of mercy?

Mr. Coates: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I think it is not in accordance with the practice of the house to accept questions directed to the government on that subject on the orders of the day or, indeed, at any time before the exercise of the prerogative.

This resolution before us today has as its main purpose the improvement of the economic position of those farmers whose land is presently classified as marginal or submarginal. However, it is not only the intention to lift up the economic status of the great number of farmers who live on these uneconomic units; the measure will also have the effect of simultaneously improving the position of farmers possessing more economic units.

Generally speaking, the objective of the national agricultural program is to give agriculture a reasonably fair share of the national income. We believe that this parity of income should not be attained by charity but by providing opportunities for the farmers to help themselves. The Prime Minister stated on August 30, 1958—and I am quoting his words—that our concept of a national policy is based on the belief that the national welfare demands positive action to meet the basic causes of distress and maladjustment in particular industries and regions.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Where did he say that? On what page?

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): The quotation will be found on page 4345 of *Hansard*, and the speech extends to page 4348. I just wish to read that last line again:

Our concept of a national policy is based on the belief that the national welfare demands positive action to meet the basic causes of distress and maladjustment in particular industries and regions.

To point up the problem referred to by the Prime Minister I should like to place some figures before the house which outline the position in stark and dramatic terms. According to the economic classification of farms in the 1956 census, 21 per cent of Canadian farms produced less than \$1,200 worth of produce annually. At that time, out of a total of 575,015 farms, there were 120,242 which fell into this category. I think the picture by provinces will be of interest to hon. members. I will name the provinces, then give the percentage of farms which produce less than \$1,200 a year.

Province	Per cent of farms with annual production under \$1,200
Newfoundland	78 per cent
Prince Edward Island	26 " "
Nova Scotia	61 " "
New Brunswick	59 " "
Quebec	28 " "
Ontario	19 " "
Manitoba	11 " "
Saskatchewan	4 " "
Alberta	9 " "
British Columbia	46 " "

The figure for Canada as a whole is 21 per cent. In the report of the royal commission

AGRICULTURE

PROVISION FOR AGREEMENTS RESPECTING MARGINAL LANDS, RURAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, ETC.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Minister of Agriculture) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to authorize the Minister of Agriculture to enter into agreements with provincial governments or agencies thereof for the undertaking jointly with those governments or agencies of projects for the alternative uses of lands that are marginal or of low productivity, projects for the development of income and employment opportunities in rural agricultural areas, and projects for the development and conservation of the soil and water resources of Canada; for the payment to the provinces of contributions in respect of the cost of such projects undertaken by a province or agency thereof; to authorize the Minister of Agriculture to undertake programs of research and investigation in respect of these matters; to provide for the establishment of advisory committees and the appointment of their members, and to provide for other related and incidental matters.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Flynn in the chair.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Chairman, in moving the adoption of this resolution I do so with the full realization that it will constitute a major step forward in fulfilling our national agricultural program presented to the house on August 30, 1958, by the Prime Minister. At that time the Prime Minister stated that there was a need for a sound, comprehensive and co-ordinated program to attack specific problems and meet specific needs. He outlined a seven point program and I would like to put on record today what he said on the fifth point, which can be found on page 4347 of *Hansard* for August 30, 1958:

Fifth, as a means of meeting the small farm problem the government has under consideration ways and means of improving the level of living for farmers on small farms by means of better land use, encouraging the formation of economic family farm units, improving technical training, extending unemployment insurance benefits to certain classes of farm workers, and by extending the vocational and technical training agreement for the benefit of those who wish to enter new occupations.