

Supply—Agriculture

The Deputy Chairman: I think all hon. members will have the opportunity to make a speech or to correct statements made by other members of the committee if they wish. I call on the hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska.

Mr. Pickersgill: On a question of privilege, the hon. gentleman has questioned a statement which I made, and I say his statement is untrue. He moved an amendment to go into supply. It was not legislation at all. He moved an amendment which he knew was of doubtful constitutional validity and for that reason alone we voted against it. The hon. member has been misrepresenting that vote in the country ever since, as is the custom of members of his party.

(Translation):

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Chairman, I shall be brief. I have indeed no intention to contribute any remarks to this debate because I feel that hon. members are only accusing each other across the house.

I very carefully listened to all those members who expressed their views here on agriculture. It is not my responsibility to say whether they were right or wrong. We are only asked to pass part of the estimates to cover the requirements for a few months only. We are arguing so violently that one might think we were debating the real estimates.

I am wondering whether, under the pretext of saving agriculture, we are not neglecting the other business of the house while debating without any purpose. Those who complain that a lot of time is lost in this house may not be wrong.

At this stage, I believe all hon. members will agree that we should pass item one of the agriculture estimates, in order to have a few minutes for a discussion on Christmas trees, because if we keep going as we have been doing so far, we will have no time for such a discussion.

Mr. Chairman, I trust that following the remarks of my hon. friends from both sides we could adopt the minister's proposal.

(Text):

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska has given us a lead. Under the first item of the estimates of the Department of Agriculture we have done something which I think the Prime Minister pledged to this house. We have given the house the chance to discuss my speech to the Saskatchewan wheat pool at Regina. As I understand the recommendation of the hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska, he too would now like to get on with these estimates so that we can talk

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

about agriculture and the spending of the money this year, because of other matters which we have to do during the balance of the session. I think this has been a fair debate. I know that I could stand up here and make several speeches on things said by the opposition on which I think I could score effective debating points. But I am willing to give them this opportunity, and to let my two propositions to the western farmers be decided by the people who in the long run will have to make that decision, namely, those same western farmers.

Mr. Chairman, if we could now get back to the estimates of my department, I would be glad to read a short statement in the hope that I can get the first item through so that we can get on to the other estimates as soon as possible.

Mr. Pickersgill: Well, I should like to say a word about that. Just from the point of view of trying to understand what the minister is driving at, is he suggesting that we have concluded the debate on his celebrated speech and that he would now like to have a debate on agriculture generally under item 1? Because if that is his suggestion, we would be quite agreeable to it and be glad to hear his statement. But if he is suggesting that he should make a statement about the general work of his department and have no debate on it, then I can assure him, particularly in view of the lead given by the Prime Minister at the beginning of the session, when he complained bitterly that the Liberals had not spoken about agriculture, that we do not have any intention of disappointing the Prime Minister a second time. There are certain members of our party who wish to discuss some of these general questions, and if it is understood that the minister would now like to make a statement about the general work of his department, I would be delighted to hear it. But I do not think it should be regarded as a form of closure.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. member for Bonaville-Twillington should never talk about closure in this house.

Mr. Pickersgill: Why not?

Mr. Hamilton: Because he is a member of the party who applied it. We are giving every opportunity to every hon. member to participate. All I am interested in is getting on with the work of the country, and I ask that we now get to the discussion of the agriculture estimates. I said that I would be glad to read a statement consisting of a page and a half of completely factual material, and if hon. members want to discuss it further, they can. But I should like to get on with the business of the estimates.