

Agreements Respecting Marginal Lands

Mr. Speakman: And did nothing.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The hon. member says he did nothing. May I say that he was the one who set up the committee which drafted the basis for this resolution? Mr. St. Laurent, who did so much for agriculture said this:

I am convinced that some of the land in eastern Canada that hard working Canadians are trying to use as farms should go back to forest and water conservation uses and those attempting to live on them resettled in more rewarding surroundings. I therefore suggest that it should be the urgent business of all levels of government and private enterprise, individual and co-operative, to see to it that agricultural production keeps up with our increase in population and thus provides the farming population with a fair share of the national income.

That is what Mr. St. Laurent said in 1956. The result was the setting up of this committee in the other place, which has done such valuable work, first under the chairmanship of a former distinguished member of this house, the former member for Quebec East, and now under Senator Pearson.

The legislation as outlined by the minister today represents in every particular recommendations made by that committee, directly or indirectly. It is also based on the report of the Gordon commission. I refer to that report of December, 1956, at page 28, where the commission recommended certain things, *inter alia*. It was suggested that the federal government should co-operate in the same way with any other province where similar problems exist, provided they are assured of the co-operation of the provincial governments concerned. The report says:

We suggest that if the people and the governments of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are interested in co-operating in such a plan, the federal government should assist the governments of these three provinces—

Then I leave out certain words and quote again from the report of the Gordon commission:

We suggest that in any such appraisal of the best land use in this area, particular attention be directed to increasing the forestry potential with a view to increasing the incomes of the people in this part of the country.

Then the report goes on to point out that what it recommends for these maritime provinces, the Atlantic area, would have equal application to the other provinces of Canada.

The minister has today made no references whatsoever to the valuable work of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. He has before him now, I take it, the model bill provided by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture for the consideration of the government.

I would like to know from the minister later on when he speaks whether the project

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

that he has in mind is not either that identical bill or one that incorporates its provisions. At any rate, no one can deny that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has made a valuable contribution to this problem. But not one word was uttered by the minister today about that contribution or the representations made by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

I have before me the brief of 1957 and the brief of 1959 of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture presented to the Senate committee on land use, studying the problem of the small farm unit. I have, likewise, a copy of the model bill. I ask the minister now, does he not think that he would have strengthened his position by referring to the viewpoints of other bodies, of the farm organizations? Does he not think that if he had given credit to Mr. St. Laurent and to the committee of the other place he would have strengthened his position?

He did not do these things because he is the arch-propagandist of the government and wanted to convey the impression in the country that this government, having given a new vision from which he was now departing, in the former department, was now about to create a newer vision still, one that was going to bring heaven and earth to the farmers of our country.

I say that whatever merit there is in this proposal—and there is, of course, fundamental merit in it, vague as the language is—that is because of the work of Mr. St. Laurent, of his government, of the committee and bodies like the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

The minister said nothing about particularizations emphasized by the federation. The federation pointed out that this kind of a project, to be effective, must cover certain areas of activity; it must cover research; it must cover community and industrial development; it must cover agricultural education and extension, vocational training, the re-establishment of economically disadvantageous farms and rural people, land and water conservation, and finally recreation and tourist development.

Are we to understand that because the minister did not include all of the recommendations, the legislation that he has in mind is not intended to be as far-reaching as that? If not, the minister will certainly run counter to the representations made by a body of the farmers of this country who have given careful consideration to this vital and important problem.

What does the minister say about the recommendations made by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture with regard to