

Supply—Agriculture

heretofore has gone unchallenged, is challenged. He gave a picture to the country of economic prosperity that really suggested to many people that the real vision for the farmers had at last come to pass under the present government. I am challenging that Utopian vision, and I can understand why it is rather disconcerting and a little irritating to the minister to have to sit here and see his fine castle of achievement and that of the Prime Minister gradually being undermined and the foundations gradually being destroyed. But I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for coming to my assistance.

Mr. Harkness: Self-delusion.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The minister's remarks on the cost of production can only be termed surprising in the light of what he said in his speech on March 6. As found on page 1683 of *Hansard* he said:

We have heard, Mr. Chairman, in this chamber and in other places a great deal about the cost of production of agricultural commodities. It has been taken for granted by many people, I believe, speaking on agricultural matters that the farmer was not getting the cost of production so far as many commodities were concerned. It may be true that some farmers are not getting the cost of production at the present time, and it may be true as far as some commodities are concerned that the cost of production as a whole is not being secured. But by and large that statement, from the investigation we have been able to make, is not correct.

Just examine the statement I have just quoted. Place that alongside what the hon. gentleman said this morning in his interventions, and alongside some of the other things he said in his statement in chief on March 6, and see if the minister has not put himself in a very difficult position, to put it in the mildest possible terms.

Then the minister devotes a lot of time in this speech to indicate the tremendous practical difficulties in arriving at cost of production figures. He says on page 1685 of *Hansard* for March 6, 1959:

Yet these cost of production figures show that the cost of feed in Alberta is much higher than it is in Ontario, an indication that it is almost impossible to arrive at anything which can be considered as scientifically accurate in these cost of production figures and studies.

Compare this statement with the statement we have that as a result of this government's action, the increase in the cost of production has been arrested.

Then later on page 1685 the minister says:

One of the reasons I mention this matter is that there is such a widespread demand for cost of production studies to be carried on and for support prices to be related to the figures produced by these studies.

What I find extraordinary about this observation by the minister is that last year

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

when we were debating the Agricultural Stabilization Act, so much importance was attached by the hon. gentleman to the cost of production. This insistence led to section 7 of the bill as introduced being amended to include the words "cost of production". As enacted, section 7, subsection 1 of the Agricultural Stabilization Act, chapter 22, 1957-58 statutes, reads as follows:

The board shall from time to time in accordance with this act take such action as is necessary to stabilize the prices of agricultural commodities at their respective prescribed prices, and shall take such action and make such recommendations as are necessary to ensure that the prescribed prices for an agricultural commodity in effect from time to time shall bear a fair relationship to the cost of production of such commodity.

The Chairman: Order. I regret to inform the hon. member that his time has expired.

Mr. Speakman: I wonder if the hon. member who has just taken his seat would permit a question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I shall be glad to answer this question if you, Mr. Chairman, will regard that as an intervention which would enable me to conclude my argument afterward.

The Chairman: The course advocated by the hon. gentleman cannot be permitted by the Chair, because we have—

Mr. Harkness: May I suggest that the committee give unanimous consent to the hon. member to conclude his remarks. When he is doing so may I ask the hon. member to read the next sentence after the one he read concerning what I said about the cost of production studies? In other words, the sentence I should like him to read is as follows:

We have been doing our best and producing the most reliable figures we can.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Is that the sentence that my hon. friend wanted?

Mr. Harkness: Yes.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am glad he added it. It only confirms what I have been saying. What my hon. friend has been arguing is that the cost of production rise has been arrested. I am not saying my hon. friend is not doing his best to minimize the mischief in the cost of production rise, but what I am saying is that my hon. friend has not arrested it.

Mr. Harkness: The hon. member has misunderstood what I was saying. He had been making the complaint that we were not using the cost of production figures in arriving at the support price, and that is not the case as indicated by the sentence I just read.