

Supply—Agriculture

Before concluding I should like to say a few words about P.F.R.A. Again I ask the minister, does he realize what he is doing to the western farmer? The best program for helping the farmer with water problems was the dugout and dam assistance program under P.F.R.A. This program paid 7½ cents per cubic yard for dugouts and dams up to a maximum of \$300. The situation now is that the rate remains at 7½ cents per cubic yard but the maximum has been lowered to \$150. In reality this means only one thing to the western farmer. The rate has been cut to 3¼ cents per cubic yard but the department has put it in different language. I do not know whether the department believes the western farmer is really that stupid.

In western Canada we realize that P.F.R.A. engineers, with their many years of experience in building the South Saskatchewan dam, for example, are the best trained men to deal with these problems. These men are now being transferred to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and an attempt is being made to scuttle P.F.R.A. at a time when western agriculture has experienced one of the driest years it has had. No group in Canada understands the water problems of western Canada better than the P.F.R.A. officials. I should like to quote a letter I received from the Rural Municipality of the Gap No. 39 pertaining to this situation. It reads:

At an agricultural conservation and improvement committee meeting held on February 26, considerable discussion took place with regard to the reduction of grants for farm dugouts and the following resolution was passed by the local committee which consists of the whole council and two other farmers at large;

"Considerable discussion took place with regard to the reduction of grants to be paid by the federal government and it was moved by Andrew Barbarin that the secretary send a letter of protest to the Hon. J. J. Greene and request that the federal grant be reinstated to what it was formerly..."

These are the problems faced by western Canada today. Recently, however, another problem has developed and I am not sure the minister has had it brought to his attention. The hon. member for Moose Mountain referred to it briefly yesterday. I refer to the effect Bill No. C-190 will have on the producers of p.m.u. which is shipped to the Ayerst laboratories in Brandon. Approximately 150 farmers in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta will be affected if this problem is not solved. I believe that this major producing area in western Canada will be affected.

Mr. Moore: Mr. Chairman, I welcome the first chance for some time to discuss the present state of agriculture in Canada. I intend to confine my remarks specifically to the dairy industry. Before I commence may I say that I listened to the minister last evening comparing two government's policies. I think it is enough to say that the farmers can judge between the two policies. What they really want to know is, what comes next? They were not told this. After the minister's speech last night, however, I am sure the farmers will know that they have nothing to fear. They have been making more money than they thought they were.

In so far as the amount of money farmers are now borrowing is concerned, I point out that in most cases farmers borrow because they have to, not because they want to. They know how difficult it is to repay this money. I base my opinion on personal experience of over 30 years as a dairy farmer. The government's policy seems to be that rural poverty can be eliminated by getting rid of the farmers. If you get rid of the farmers, you get rid of the poverty. I would not like to try to tell the small dairy farmer who gets no subsidy that he never had it so good. I would not even like to tell the fluid milk shipper on a small quota that he never had it so good.

This government is not noted for having an agricultural policy but it does introduce a dairy policy each year, and a different one each year. The government hopes that this will keep the producers reasonably quiet until next year. The result is that the dairy farmer, who is running practically a lifetime operation, cannot make any long term plans. Policy is changed every year, sometimes even in mid-year, so a planned program is impossible. Guess who is left holding the bag as usual.

The Department of Agriculture, aided now by the Canadian Dairy Commission, has two separate pieces of advice for the dairy farmer designed to help him with his problems. These are two very interesting, separate pieces of advice. The first piece of advice is that he must increase his efficiency, enlarge his unit and work longer hours. This means working longer than the average of 13 hours a day for a dairyman. He must also cut his costs of production, and tell us how he does that these days. Finally, he must improve his herd.

• (5:50 p.m.)

With regard to herd improvement, what is the record achieved by Canadian stockmen