

*The Address—Mr. Major*

easily be realized. The farmer was faced with the necessity of making immediate repairs to his buildings, which were so vital to economic production, and he realized also that he could not continually draw from the soil without making certain disbursements to add to its fertility.

Then came the war period with its restrictions. Prices began to adjust themselves, but in the adjustment heed was taken of the need to encourage the people of Great Britain in their war effort. Although higher prices could have been obtained, and although higher prices prevailed in the United States, our farmers accepted lower prices for the food they produced. The net margin obtained, however, was not sufficient to allow them to attend, as they would have liked, to the repair and upkeep of machinery and buildings, as well as the fertilization of the soil.

Unlike industrial production, which is timed and controlled by the will of men, farm production is more or less timed and controlled by nature. The farm producer, being conscious of the food requirements of his country, must always aim at a larger production than the immediate need, so that there may always be enough to meet requirements. I believe everyone will agree that the farm producer should receive sufficient for his food products to cover the cost of production, as well as the cost of maintenance. If the producer must produce a surplus in his endeavour to satisfy the requirements of his fellow citizens, then I would say that the disposal of the surplus food is the responsibility of all the citizens of the country. The producer should not be asked to accept a price lower than the cost of production, and thereby bear alone the full burden of cheaper food. This burden should be borne jointly by the producer and his fellow citizens.

As you know, the producer of mixed food products must work strenuously for long hours. His is not a task involving an eight-hour day with paid vacations, but a task which usually extends from daylight to sunset, and for seven days a week. Stock must be cared for and cows milked, even on Sundays. It is no wonder, therefore, that the farmer's son is leaving this arduous toil, which brings little or no remuneration, for the less arduous job in which he can find time to enjoy himself before calling it a day. When the displaced persons first arrived, the farmers were of the opinion that to some extent the farm labour problem would be solved. It took only a short time, however, for these men to remind us that our day was too long, and our man-hour effort too strenuous, for the remuneration obtained. Long before their year's contract was up,

these displaced persons had made arrangements for employment which would bring them a higher take-home pay with fewer hours of work.

As long as the food producer can exchange the value of a day of agricultural labour for the value of a day of industrial labour, he does not mind too much the hard work and long hours. If and when it happens that he has to give more than a day for a day's return, then his ambition is weakened and his purchasing power reduced. Care should always be taken to make sure that neither his ambition nor his purchasing power is reduced to the extent of jeopardizing the stability of our country. The old method of free markets, and allowing the law of supply and demand to function, might have served a purpose when labour was not a factor and when the producer could have leather tanned in his home village and his boots made by the local shoemaker at a nominal price. The fluctuation of prices may not have been felt as much at that time; but now that the farmer must equip himself with the most modern devices necessary to produce as successfully and economically as possible, both in quantity and in quality, the producer cannot afford to have trade set a lower price for his product than the cost of production. Not only could he not carry on, but the disappearance of farm purchasing power would have most serious repercussions on all other industries.

A vivid and glaring example of this was recently brought to light with the ending of the egg contract with Great Britain. At that time the handling of the product was placed at the mercy of the regular trading channels. It is true that for some time the trade had been requesting that it be allowed to handle the product without intervention. It is unfortunate that the trade had to prove its inability to cope with the marketing of the product and maintain a reasonable price. The sudden and drastic fall of egg prices has been the result. We have seen also the parade of poultry to a depressed market, and this would have continued but for the fact the government used its power under the Agricultural Prices Support Act and announced that the eggs in storage next fall would be bought at a fixed price. You may rest assured that the parade of poultry to market would have continued long enough to change the egg from a welcome food to a scarcity.

It may be said that the misfortune of the producer was the fortune of the consumer, who for a short time could obtain unreasonably cheap food. But, Mr. Speaker, this is mere illusion; because while the consumer