

I cannot let that pass. I believe that every hon. member and every person in Canada will acknowledge that during these war years the women of this country have proved by their deeds what capable people they are. They have gone into practically every one of the industries which are vital to war production. They have undertaken heavy physical labour. They have also taken on types of work requiring executive ability and the kind of ability which is of the brain and not so much physical. In view of these facts, I hope that the omission to which I have referred in the Prime Minister's speech the other evening was not intentional but occurred merely because he failed for the moment to think; for when we realize what women have done, are doing and will continue to do to fight for the preservation of democracy and for Canada, all must agree that they have a place among legislators to decide on the issues of peace and war, to see to it that this country in post-war years has those things which the people need.

As I have said, what I wish to speak about mainly is the fight on the food front. It was stated in this chamber, I believe last session by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston), that with regard to the question of supplying men, materials or food, he would not like to place any one of them in the first position; that men, armaments and materials of war, and food, all three of them, are so tremendously important that none can be considered before the others. At the present time the position of the people who are fighting on our food front is receiving less consideration than any other branch of our war effort. During the recess I spent possibly about a week in my own home; the rest of the time I spent in the rural areas among the farming people of Saskatchewan and Alberta, and during that period I learned much at first hand as to the ability of our farm people to put up the fight which they want to make on their particular front.

Our job to-day in this house is to tackle immediate problems as they come up; that is the first job of legislators during a period of war, and I fail to see why the speech from the throne did not mention specifically this matter of the fight on the food front. I will not call it just an agricultural problem. Were I to do so, it might bring up in the minds of many hon. members something of a rather painful nature. It is rather like a boil on the neck; it has come up so much during the years of depression that now, in war-time, many hon. members think of agriculture, as they did in the past, as something which is painful

[Mrs. Nielsen.]

because it is difficult. I speak of it as the fight on the food front to bring it before this house as a war emergency; for that is what it is. We are asked to tackle in a realistic manner the problem of increasing food supplies; and if we do so in the way in which we have tackled the problem of industrial development for war needs, not only will it aid in the winning of the war, but the measures we introduce to increase food production will lay the foundation of economic security for our farming people in the post-war years. We shall have a structure upon which we can plan. Unless the economic security of our farming people is made possible now, all the plans that are made will tumble about our ears like a pack of cards in the years after the war.

The question of the fight on the food front is not a political question; it is an issue of national importance. I am not bringing it forward because I am an opposition member and wish to use this material, so to speak, to hurl at the government because I sit among the opposition. It is a question which should command the interest and understanding of hon. members of all parties; and the speech of this afternoon of the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Reid) shows that it is a subject which hon. members on all sides are going to ponder more and more.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilesley) has expressed the hope that this particular debate will soon finish so that he can bring before us some financial bills. I can understand his anxiety to attend to those matters; but let me point out that agriculture will not wait, either, because agriculture and the fight on the food front depend upon the seasons of the year. The matter of increasing the production of food and stock and of ensuring that the maximum acreage of land is under cultivation this year has to be attended to before farmers get out with their ploughs in the spring. The question of stock increase is particularly important in the spring of the year. Whatever we are hoping to do to fulfil the quotas which have been set for us must be done very soon. That is why I am anxious to bring before the house certain points with regard to this fight on the food front.

The increasing tempo of the allied offensive leads all of us to hope that in the very near future we shall be able to foresee the ultimate victory—the sooner the better. But in considering the question of food increases we must remember that the achievement of military victory does not mean that we can sit back with a feeling that there will then be no further need of these increases. With the winning of victory in the field, demands for