

The Address—Mr. Zaplitny

We need a national health insurance program, but I shall not go into details about that as my leader has placed our proposals before the house.

There is another matter which while not strictly a social security item certainly is required. I refer to aid for education. I am glad the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Fair), who always makes an excellent speech, referred to that today. I shall not undertake to discuss it in detail as I have a resolution on the order paper already and it would be out of order for me to discuss it ahead of time.

Suffice to say that within the last few months the people of Canada from coast to coast, especially such organized bodies as school teachers and educational societies, have expressed the opinion that it is necessary for the federal government to come to the assistance of the provinces which are trying to bring about an improved standard of education but which find themselves in financial difficulties.

Only recently we heard of the teachers' strike in Montreal and newspaper reports indicate that possibly a further dispute may arise. It is going to become more and more difficult for some of the provinces to finance their educational program unless this government is prepared to give some grants in aid to help them over the rough spots.

Perhaps the most important problem that faces Canada today, particularly western Canada, is the need for the stabilization of the agricultural industry and I say "stabilization" advisedly. During the past few years the government of Canada has been making agreements with other countries for the sale of agricultural products and has given assurance to the farmers of Canada that they will not be penalized by the fact that their products are being sold at controlled prices.

I am sure that the government will realize that the farmers of western Canada, the grain growers particularly, have been very patient and co-operative. They accepted the plan of the government to sell grain to Great Britain and other countries under agreement on the understanding that the government would do everything possible to keep the cost of production at its then level. These agreements were entered into and we know what has happened. Figures have been placed on *Hansard* in the last few days and I do not need to repeat them. However, I will say that the cost of production certainly has not remained stationary.

I should like to quote from the *Rural Co-Operator*, which is published in this province. They are giving their point of view on this question. They issue a warning, and it

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is a serious warning, and I am sure the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) will be the first one to admit it.

In discussing the increased cost of production, Mr. Hannam had this to say:

But a double-barrelled trend of farm prices going down and costs remaining high or going higher will soon undermine farm prosperity. The danger is it could and might develop into a period of general business recession. Because of this danger, maintenance of agriculture in a healthy economic position is vital to the national welfare.

Those are words of wisdom.

Mr. Gardiner: My hon. friend has said he is sure I would be the first to agree. I should like to point out that statement is a prophecy of what may happen in the future. Would my friend not agree that up to the present time farmers are getting the highest return for their products they have ever had?

Mr. Zaplitny: I am glad the minister made that interjection, because I started out with what I had to say by saying that it is the duty of this parliament to look into the future, and to make provision for certain things that may happen.

Mr. Gardiner: We have done very well up to the present.

Mr. Zaplitny: I am not going to detract from the minister's self-congratulation. Perhaps he feels justified in patting himself on the back.

Mr. Gardiner: Even that statement says that.

Mr. Zaplitny: I think perhaps the best thing I can do, Mr. Speaker, is to continue to quote. Perhaps the minister will take a somewhat different view of it as I go on. The same article continues:

During the war farmers toiled long hours, increased their production, and sold their product far below cost. At the same time the dominion government paid industry's "cost plus." It promised farmers, as postwar compensation, floor prices which would give them more than the market price.

That has not yet happened.

What have they had? A ceiling price on butter, a ban on exports to the United States, which still remains on dairy products, and margarine. At the same time industry has been making unprecedented profits. The dominion government has been allowing industry special taxation privileges such as double depreciation, for instance, charging up the cost of new capital equipment over a period of five years as a deduction from income tax.

Mr. Gardiner: The only criticism I would make up to that point is that the interjection made by the hon. member is not in the statement itself. I refer to his words, "that has not yet happened". As a matter of fact, prices to the farmer on many of these farm commodities are higher now in Canada than they could receive in the United States.