

May I at this point say a word about labour. Although I do not wish to speak at too great length, I believe it is time I said something in this respect. I have avoided saying anything in the house about labour because I did not wish to add to the difficulties of the minister or the administration in what must necessarily be a baffling problem. To-day however I am inviting the Minister of Labour (Mr. McLarty) to give the house and the country a clear-cut statement of the government's labour policy. I do not think we have ever had one. We have heard about numerous orders in council which each may construe for himself. My impression is that organized labour thought they were being handed a bill of rights, but instead of that they got a statement of principles without any legal effect. I now ask the minister to give us a clear-cut statement of the labour policy of the government, and to tell us what orders in council are in force and what have been repealed.

It is true that for the moment Canada is comparatively free from labour problems. I know of only two minor problems, one in my own province and one in the adjoining province. I should like also to learn from the minister whether the provisions of the recent declaration respecting wages are designed to do away with the policy of collective bargaining. And if there is to be a ceiling on wages, what about the bonus system, which is in effect an increase in wages? How will that react to the ceiling on prices, especially on food prices? It is a fact that food prices are on an uneven basis. To freeze them on that basis is to do a great injury to the agricultural population of the country.

I am a defender of the consumer, because I belong to that class myself. I do say to the government, however—and I may have something further to say about the wage policy later on, because I do not wish to take the time to say it to-day—that to freeze food prices at the uneven level of to-day is to do a grievous injustice to the primary producers in Canada, who have had a pretty hard time of it since the war began.

Mr. ROWE: And to production itself.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Yes. The order in council making the provisions, it is true, indicates that these inequalities will be ironed out. What does that mean? It means simply that the fellow with the most push and pull will get farther, and the fellow who has not so much push and pull, or who has not the opportunity or the money to present his case, will get nowhere.

Mr. SENN: And he needs it most.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): As the hon. member for Haldimand (Mr. Senn) suggests, it is the man who is least effective in protecting his own position who needs it most. I agree with that entirely.

Perhaps the most satisfactory interview we had in England was with Mr. Bevin, who is now Minister of Labour and National Service. He was not in politics prior to the war, but was drafted to a portfolio when the national government was formed. I believe he entered the government from a sense of duty.

In a word, what is the position there? It is that organized labour has voluntarily forgone the right to strike for the duration of the war. I never thought organized labour would forgo the right to strike. On the other hand the association of employers in England has agreed that there shall be no lockouts for the duration of the war. Of course there are disputes. Minor disputes are referred to regional agents who conciliate between the men and the employers, and in that way settle the difficulties. This is done day after day. But any major disputes are settled by compulsory arbitration. I believe in a word or two I have stated the position of labour in England. What an example for Canada to follow—and, may I add, if I am not presumptuous, what an example for the great republic to the south of us! Is it not possible that some such arrangement as that could be worked out in Canada? I leave that suggestion with the government. I do not think you can do it on a party basis. I do not think you can do it without labour being represented in the government. I do not think you can do many of the things which I have visualized without broadening the base of this government.

May I suggest to the Prime Minister that if we are to have a total war effort he must broaden the base of his government and bring in men of national stature, men upon whom the people can rely. The people are naturally suspicious of a party government. The fellow on the other side will say, "Oh, they are Grits; I cannot trust them." If you bring in men of national stature and have a truly national government—I do not mean a coalition or a union government, but a government made up of national figures—the country will respond and support such a government through thick and thin. I return to that suggestion, and I should like the Prime Minister to give effect to it.

I had not intended to refer this afternoon to the reaffirmation by the Prime Minister, either when he was in England or shortly after his return, of his belief that an imperial