

That may indicate, perhaps, the great outstanding fact that the extent to which we are truly grateful for a bountiful harvest will possibly be dependent upon the proportion of that harvest which we are allowed to enjoy. Let me go on to say that in all parts of Canada a very large proportion of the production is eaten up by our inequitable system of distribution, and in this connection I would like to quote, not a radical writer, but rather a few sentences from an interview with the late W. J. Hanna at the time he was food controller, when he found himself faced with the necessity of doing something if possible to eliminate some of the profits which went to the middleman. Mr. Hanna at that time referred to:

The supernumerary, unnecessary and inefficient middleman, whose presence in the community is one of the most serious economic wastes of the day,—

And later he goes on to say:

That there have long been too many city people and too few farmers in this Dominion is common knowledge, but it is not so well known that among our city people there are too many mere distributors, too many shippers, packers, carriers, wholesalers, retailers, advertisers, printers, salesmen, brokers, sub-brokers, deputy brokers, assistant-sub-deputy-brokers, and the whole army of people in the services and professions that wait upon the middleman.

Later, in speaking of this inflated staff of non-producers, he says it—

—was and still is dependent for its wages upon the movement of farm goods to the city and city goods to the farm, and all the over-specialized, over-elaborated processes which a luxurious civilization imagines are necessary to its happiness—

Here again may I emphasize that we have perhaps in this very House a large number who more nearly represent that great class of middlemen, and it is not much wonder that perhaps they rejoice in the bountiful harvest because they are able to secure a very considerable proportion of that harvest. I am reminded of a saying of Mr. Bernard Shaw's, to the effect that man is the only animal that counts himself rich according to the number and voracity of his parasites.

Let me pass on in considering this bountiful harvest to the question of some of the people who actually help take it off; I mean the harvesters. I happened to come down on the train with a number of these men who were returning to the east; some of them were riding in the regular coaches, while some had been riding on box cars. On that very trip one poor fellow had apparently fallen between the cars. In conversation with a number of the men who had been out through the west for the harvest, I found that owing to the rain

which came during harvest time, a very large number of these men were unable to obtain very much as the result of the weeks they spent in the west. I would like to commend to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Motherwell) a suggestion that we might very well make provision for some kind of insurance for those who harvest the western crop. It is undoubtedly a question of national importance that the wheat harvest should be safely garnered in, but we often find that owing to an early frost in one particular region, a hail storm in another region, or an early snowfall in still another, hundreds of men are thrown out of work. It would seem reasonable that the great burden of a disaster of that kind should not be borne by the few individual harvest hands who happen to be located in that particular district. The west is accustomed to insurance against hail and other such contingencies, and it would not seem an unreasonable thing that the Agriculture department or the Immigration department, recognizing the importance of the task, and also recognizing that no group of individuals in one neighbourhood or no one district could handle this situation, should bring forward some sort of insurance scheme. The details of this would need to be carefully worked out. The end to be attained is that those men who go from the east or from overseas to harvest the crops of the west may be sure of coming back with at least decent wages for the time they have spent in this very essential work.

Further in this connection might I point out that the ordinary industrial worker in the cities has by no means profited to the extent he should profit by the bountiful harvest, and the added production which has characterized the last year in this country. Let me give a statement from a recent investigator of wages on this continent:

The recent researches of Paul H. Douglas show that the gain in real wages in the United States from 1890 to 1919 did not average one-half of one per cent a year.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the conditions are very similar in Canada, although we have not had a careful research carried on in this country. If during the past 20 years the industrial worker in the United States has gained only something like one-half of one per cent a year in real wages, it would seem to me that it might very well be that we should devote a little more time to asking what this bountiful harvest means to the ordinary man in industry or on the farm.

At six o'clock the House took recess.