

It is regrettable that the Prime Minister should have so managed as to put himself in such a position that he should feel obliged to hold a plebiscite. But it is the opinion of many that, having done so, apparently the only logical way out for his party would seem to be a plebiscite.

So much having been said about the plebiscite, let us consider the balanced programme of production, which was the second point that attracted me. By that expression the Prime Minister means, I presume, either (a) having the whole Canadian economy in balance, or (b) producing a balanced amount of each necessity in our war effort. Whatever the meaning, agriculture must be our first concern. It is the most important of all industries. Our farmers now operate at a loss. There may be some exceptions in some provinces, but I affirm without fear of successful contradiction that the farmers of Canada are now operating at a loss; and whereas the producers of war munitions are said to be operating on a basis of cost plus ten per cent, it will be found that the farmers of Canada are operating practically on a basis of cost minus ten per cent.

What is the government doing to bring about an increase in natural production? By what machinery does the government get out to the province, to the county, the municipality, the school district and the farmer: first, just what it wishes that area or that farmer to produce; second, just what the government will help him to produce and how it will help him; third, just what the government will take when it is produced; fourth, just what protection the government will give the farmer in producing it, and how? Does the government know just what it wants each of the above units, each province, each county, each municipality, to produce, and why? How many eggs does the government want? We hear reports of 30,000,000 dozen being required or as many as we can produce. Why not find out how many we think the country can produce and then apportion that number among the various provinces and get down to a businesslike campaign in seeking to increase production?

How much bacon does the government want? How much could it use? How much will it take? The government should plan for the production of a certain amount of bacon and of the various other farm commodities. Mr. Speaker, do you know that the farmers are getting so fed up with the general blundering and mismanagement everywhere apparent in everything pertaining to the agricultural policy of this country that they are threatening to go away and enlist or do anything to get out of agriculture.

Has the government let the individual farmer know what it expects him to produce? If so, by what means has it done this? And how does it know that the farmer knows? Does the government have any definite idea what the farmer is going to do about it, and if so, how?

As an illustration there is in a certain area in my constituency a company which has for some years engaged in the production of beet sugar. This company knows by this time of year just how many acres of beets it wants produced and delivered and it sends out its agents to the farmers all over the area and signs up the required acreage to within half an acre. The result is that it knows exactly how many acres of beets will be planted, and the farmer knows how many beets he will be allowed to sell and what the price is going to be, to within a dollar—yes, better than that. If that sort of planning were followed by the government in the various provinces and counties of Canada with respect to other commodities, what a wonderful difference it would make and what a tremendous addition there would be to the security, happiness and peace of the farmer.

What has the government done to supply the farmer with labour to replace the farmer's boy who has joined the army? Does the farmer know what the government is going to do? Has the government told him individually?

Mr. CHURCH: The government is going to hold a referendum.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Does the government know that the farmer may sell his breeding cows, sell his chickens, sell his equipment, and sell his farm or give it up for taxes, and that after that occurs in a very large percentage of the areas in Canada the effect upon our productive capacity within the next two years is going to be disastrous? What is the matter with the men in charge of the Department of Agriculture that they are unable to foresee these things? What we are going to have, the first thing we know, is a sort of agricultural repetition of Hong Kong. Some government member will say: who was able to foresee for us at a certain time that such a thing was going to happen? With respect to Hong Kong I say that ninety-five per cent of the people of Canada could foresee what was bound to happen before very long. Apparently the exceptions were all in the cabinet. Ninety-five per cent of farmers can see catastrophe ahead with regard to agriculture. Why cannot the government see it?

What is the government doing with respect to reserving electricity for the farmer? There