

The Address—Mr. Coldwell

put it that way—that no further steps have been taken toward a national health plan. No such steps are indicated in the speech from the throne this year. The time is long overdue when Canada should have such a plan. After all, we are one of the only two large democratic countries in the world without some sort of national health plan to cover all the people, under a state system. The other country is the United States.

I was in Great Britain and other places this summer. While I shall not say much about it just now, although I may later, I found wherever I went that perhaps the most popular thing ever done in Great Britain was the placing on the statute books of their national health plan. And let it be known that I did not move only or even to a large extent among people who shared my philosophy. I could not help noticing that the policies followed there—rationing, yes; control of prices, yes, and so on—in the last 15 years or so, as well as the health plan, have had a great beneficial effect on the physical appearance and the obvious welfare of the boys and girls of the United Kingdom. When, as I did, leaving London around four o'clock to avoid the rush hours, one sees them getting on the trains after leaving their schools, he could not help noticing their fine physique and, incidentally, their excellent behaviour. These were things which pleased me very much indeed.

So it is that we are disappointed because we are not progressing faster toward this great humanitarian measure. Day by day we see in the newspapers stories of hardship because people are unable to afford the kind of medical and health care they need. I know it is said that anyone who needs the services of a doctor can get them, and in what I say I am not criticizing the medical profession at all. But I do say that many people will not go soon enough to be examined, at the onset of a disease, because they fear the expense—the doctor's fee, the hospitalization charges, and all the rest of it. It seems to me that here is a great advance in social security this country should make without delay.

I said a moment ago that there are two problems, other than the international problem, which should have received attention long ago. Those two problems are urgent and are before us at the present time. They are of course the decline in farm income and increased unemployment among industrial and other workers throughout the country.

Of course these two conditions are closely related. The decline in farm income is felt immediately in the industrial centres, and the lack of purchasing power in the industrial centres is felt in the farm areas. Because if the workers in the cities cannot

buy quantities of meat, of eggs, of butter and the like, then of course surpluses ensue and farm prices fall.

So we see the two are interrelated. Net farm income has declined about 40 per cent in the last three years, according to the figures issued by the dominion bureau of statistics. Unemployment has risen each year as farm income has declined. Let us look at recent farm statistics, and again the authority is the dominion bureau of statistics, referring particularly to figures for comparable periods. I shall refer to the figures for 1953 and 1954, and in particular to two columns found in the outline issued by the bureau. These are the figures for the period January to September, 1953, and January to September, 1954.

In 1953 the cash income is given as \$1,938 million whereas in 1954, during the same months, it was \$1,686 million, or a drop of some \$252 million in farm income and farm purchasing power.

I said earlier that to a large extent this decline is not a reflection of the crop failure in western Canada last summer. Rather it is due mainly to our failure to sell some of our farm commodities, notably grains—wheat—which have piled up. It is true that some farm products other than grain showed some increase in returns, due to an increase in farmers' marketings. I am thinking for example of calves. More calves went on the market, as did also more of some other types of produce. But the returns per unit of production in most instances were not higher. Although the aggregate amount was greater, the return per unit was not.

We find now that our own Department of Agriculture, expressing its opinion at the federal-provincial conference with respect to 1955, holds the view that, assuming an average crop this year—and we all hope that we may have an average crop; it may be that we deserve something above average, because of the failure last year—net farm income will be approximately the same as in 1954. If that is so it will not be satisfactory.

In the light of the squeeze that has occurred in connection with those engaged in agriculture, we must have something better. That squeeze has developed because while returns have been reduced over this period of time, costs have tended to rise. Marketings may improve, but I do not think this will compensate for the decline in income and the rise in farm costs. The farmer is caught in a price squeeze. Where farm returns from some commodities increase in the aggregate, production costs increase even more, and that lowers the return for the amount of