

Supply—Mr. W. H. A. Thomas

Now, I know people of this kind in my own constituency of Middlesex West. I believe there are many such cases scattered across this country. I feel that if we make it possible the administrators of the Farm Credit Corporation will help these people because I know it is the intention to help them. It should be possible to lend such people money which they can repay, of course, to modernize their homes and provide themselves with adequate and satisfactory water supplies as well as to raise the general standards of their lives. This is my special plea today in this house, that the government sponsor action to provide a fuller life for the small farmers, the small land holders throughout this country.

In general, agriculture is going through a cost price squeeze. The costs of farm taxes, equipment, and farm labour have been rising. The farmers are not making the profits they should make. It is impossible for them to make ends meet. This applies particularly to the dairy farmers, most of whom, those who are not on whole milk contracts—find it necessary to make their living by selling milk which goes into industrial uses. The government has indicated it is now undertaking to provide these farmers with \$3.50 per hundred pounds for their product. For the last several years they have been getting from \$2.90 per hundred pounds up to about \$3.25. This is insufficient to pay the costs of their operation and make a living.

There are other ways in which the dairy industry can be helped. The proposal of the government to establish a national dairy council is, I believe, a step in the right direction. The price of dairy products has not kept pace with rising costs but because of the nature of this industry action to assist the dairy producer cannot be taken to the best advantage on a provincial basis. National action is necessary. I shall be glad to lend my support to the government's proposal in this regard.

Dairying is carried on in every province of Canada. I believe, therefore, that a national dairy commission should be organized along the lines of the Canadian Wheat Board, with similar powers to regulate the marketing of dairy products as those which the Canadian Wheat Board has in connection with the marketing of wheat. A place has been left for private enterprise under the Canadian Wheat Board operation and a place should be left for private enterprise to operate in the dairy industry. Because of the broad, coast to coast scope of the dairy industry, because of the

[Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West).]

large number of operators in the industry, dairy operators can no more combine to protect themselves than could the grain farmers of the prairies.

Government action is needed to provide this protection and place dairy producers in a position where they can compete with other segments of our economy. Market stability and fair prices for dairy products would do much to raise the living standards of thousands of rural people in all parts of the country. I believe that the stabilized level for the price of milk used for industrial purposes should be raised to \$4 per hundredweight. This is not my suggestion. It has been made by others but I strongly back it. The present objective of \$3.50 per hundredweight is not sufficient to put the producers of industrial milk in a sound financial position.

An eastern feed grain agency, such as has been proposed on several occasions in this house and which was mentioned in the Throne Speech, should be another step in the right direction. It should assist dairy farmers as well as other producers in the eastern part of Canada and in British Columbia.

Unemployment insurance for farm labour would also assist farmers in their effort to obtain sufficient help on their farms. I can say that in our area in Middlesex county there is hardly a hired man left on any of the farms. You cannot get them. They are not to be had unless they are men who have been on the family farm for years and years and it has become their home, there is an attachment there and their roots are sunk deep. These are the only hired men it is possible to find in that county.

While we are on the subject of agriculture, I may say we have a rather large Indian reservation in West Middlesex with a population of 1,600. There are three bands of Indians occupying the reserve, the Oneidas of the Thames, the Chippewas of the Thames and the Munceys of the Thames. These reserves contain some of the finest land in Middlesex county, and Middlesex county contains some of the finest land in the whole of Canada. There are thousands of acres of agricultural land lying idle on this reserve on which weeds and brush are growing. If this land were all producing, considerable wealth would accrue to the inhabitants of the reserve.

• (6:40 p.m.)

The appearance of the reserve would be much improved and some jobs for the local residents would result. The individual land