

of the Bill so as to prevent men engaged in the production of foodstuffs from going to the front at the present time. Authorities whom we cannot ignore claim that one of the great needs of the present war is the production of foodstuffs. They say that foodstuffs are almost as essential as men. In that country from the Manitoba boundary to the boundary of British Columbia, we have the greatest food-producing section of Canada, but owing to the splendid response to the call to arms made by the settlers in that country I am sorry to say that our productive area this year is going to be less than it has been for the preceding two years.

This is a regrettable circumstance, as I believe that the present year is the one in which production in this country should be greatest, and the one especially in which the Allies will depend upon us to feed the men at the front. An interview was recently published with Mr. Prothero, president of the Board of Agriculture of Great Britain, from which I shall quote briefly:

The outcome of the war may ultimately hang on the question of food supplies, and the American farmer is allotted the essential part to play in the great struggle for freedom. . . . From the grim spectacle of human carnage and from the feverish race of piling up munitions the farmer stands aloof. His task is to make hills, plains and valleys stand so thick with corn that they shall sing. Yet the man who drives a plough is helping as is the man who shoulders a rifle. . . . For this reason it is a welcome relief to us to know that the farmers of the United States are co-operating with the Allies, that they fully realize the essential part they play in this struggle for freedom, that they are bringing into their work the spirit of self-sacrifice and endurance, and that they are determined to put out the last ounce of their strength to win the war on the ploughlands of the United States. Here and there, God speed the plough.

Sir Thomas Lipton is an authority on the production of food. He sees the importance of this question, and he has recently stated:

I know for a fact that there is no bluff in all this talk about the scarcity of food. We are up against it. America has come in just at the right moment for us, and no one can ever make me believe America will not be able to rise to the emergency.

The situation here is much worse than English people realize. The storehouses throughout the country are being emptied of food, and we who are in the trade know they are not being supported by the stocks we used to keep.

The public doesn't see this. Everything is being run bare. There is some idea here that we are not taking strong enough action to meet the crisis. That is not so. I know for a fact that the most drastic kind of machinery is being prepared to put the whole United Kingdom on rations, and you can take it from me that when the necessity arises the machinery will be ready.

[Mr. Douglas.]

There is a lesson for us in Canada in statements such as these made by reputable men who know the conditions in the Motherland intimately, and I think it is the duty of this Government to take strong measures in regard to this question of food supply. I join with my friend from West Middlesex (Mr. Ross) in saying that in my judgment very few farmers should be permitted to enlist. The production of food is so important, the number of men who have gone from the farms is so great, that it is an absolute necessity for the successful prosecution of the war on the part of Canada that the food-producing industries of this country should be very carefully safeguarded. We have seen an unprecedented rise in flour within the past year. I think the Government should face this situation for the coming year and, if necessary, commandeer every flour mill in the country, and should commandeer also packing houses, cold storage warehouses, canning factories, and all other concerns that supply food to the people and derive undue profit from the sale of the same. I know for a fact that men in western Canada—and all men are human when money enters into the question—men of small capital, are going about the country buying all the eggs and butter they can find, and storing them, in expectation of high prices. They look for a price of at least a dollar a dozen for eggs during the coming winter. In ordinary times I should have no fault to find with men doing this sort of thing, but under the circumstances of to-day I think it is the duty of the Government to see to it that profiteering of this kind is not permitted for the people suffer by it, and suffer very severely, and our effectiveness in the war is hindered by this means.

Let me briefly sum up my views on this question. I consider compulsory service the only fair means of the State receiving from its citizens that full measure of service to which it is entitled. By this I do not only refer to those of its young manhood who are called upon to risk their lives on the battle front. I believe that in a crisis such as now confronts us there is a service every man and woman is called upon to perform, and it is the duty of any Government to so organize its forces that this duty will be performed in an equitable manner. This should be the true meaning of compulsory service. I heartily approve of any plan of taxation which will reach the people who are deriving a certain measure of prosperity brought about by this war.