

*The Address—Mr. Nicholson*

Britain. He pointed out that his government had been engaged over a period of two years in organizing such a ministry and that the staff had been selected several months before hostilities broke out. He intimated that it was not until 1916 during the great war that a similar ministry had been established. His words were:

For every man in the front line, you must have many behind the lines, engaged in the production and servicing of weapons of war.

Although two years have passed, it is not too late to establish such a ministry in Canada in order that we may plan our economic warfare. I am aware of the fact that we have a committee on economic policy under the chairmanship of the deputy minister of finance. The membership of this committee includes the governor of the Bank of Canada and some deputy ministers in key departments. Every member of this committee is carrying tremendous responsibility, and I do not see how it is physically possible for them to give the direction that should be given to Canada's economic policy.

The questions that should be asked and answered are: How many men and women can be used in the various armed forces in order that Canada may make her greatest contribution? How many men and women should be engaged in our various war industries? How many should we have on our farms producing the foodstuffs necessary adequately to feed our own people and to fill every inch of space on the boats plying the Atlantic? As I said, these questions should be asked and they should be answered.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley) has urged us to consume less. A year ago I asked him to be more specific and to help us decide what commodities we should not consume in order that we might help our war effort. To date the Canadian people are waiting in vain for direct leadership in the field of consumption. A bewildered Canadian people scan the daily and weekly newspapers and see where they are urged to buy automobiles, radios, refrigerators, furniture and every conceivable commodity. High-pressure salesmen interview people who have received pay cheques and explain that since these articles are being manufactured and sold, no harm will follow in acquiring possession. On the one hand our people are urged not to consume and, on the other, they are urged to consume.

Our farmers across the country have been urged by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) to produce less wheat. One of the pamphlets issued last year by his depart-

[Mr. Nicholson.]

ment says that less wheat in 1941 will help win the war. The government asked as a war service that the land sown to wheat in 1941 be reduced as much as possible compared with 1940. Are we to understand that the farmer who does not produce any wheat is making his greatest contribution? The Canadian farmers are waiting in vain for a lead from this government as to what should be done. I endorse what was said by the hon. member (Mr. Gray) who has just taken his seat regarding the uneasiness in the minds of the Canadian farmers. I, for one, am not satisfied with the decisions with regard to agriculture's place which have been made by the committee on national war services in our province.

Just recently I had occasion to discuss a case with the chairman of the board. This was the case of a young man who had bought a farm in 1937, two years before war broke out. He got married after war broke out and is now in the twenty-four-year-old age group. He has several cows, horses, pigs, chickens, et cetera. I realize that the chairman of this board is a judge who has an enviable reputation as a soldier and on the bench, but I am not willing to agree that he is in a position to decide what foodstuffs Canada should produce and whether a man's contribution should be made in the armed forces or on the farm. The order issued to this young man was to report on January 8, which involved the selling of his live stock and the necessity for making such other arrangements as he could. I think the board wisely agreed to give him another thirty days, but he still does not know what the decision will be at the end of that time. The chairman of the board pointed out that by being in the armed forces this young man could look after his family much better than if he were on the farm. That may be true, but is that the policy of this government? Is it the policy to take men off our farms who are producing and place them in the army and to leave our farms without men to operate them?

As I said, we want leadership. We want this government to do everything necessary to see that every man or woman is in his or her right place to make the greatest contribution. There is not an hon. member representing a rural constituency who has not had a great many inquiries from people who have said, "Well, if we have too much food, how about getting into a war industry?" Those of us who come from the west have had countless requests. I should like to cite one case which is unusual rather than typical. This is a case where I think one would say