

Canadian Centennial

Now I may say that the planning committee, if such were set up, could take this whole matter under consideration and would probably agree that the sugar beet industry of Canada was well worth saving. During two world wars this sugar beet industry served a great purpose in Canada but, aside from saving the industry as a possible means of home supply in case of emergency, the sugar beet industry is furnishing jobs to a great many people, especially to new Canadians who, when they are first brought to this country, work in the sugar beet and tobacco fields for a couple of seasons and are thus able to save enough money to make a down payment on a farm of their own.

The sugar beet industry in Ontario and these other areas furnishes large amounts of work for local truckers such as the man who owns his own truck and makes a living by doing local haulage work. There is also a great investment in the sugar refineries themselves and in all the equipment which is used. Furthermore, as far as southern Ontario is concerned, if some inducement were given to the growing of sugar beets, the 20,000 acres now producing crops could, in round figures, be increased to nearly 40,000 acres. That would mean 20,000 acres could be taken out of soybeans and corn and other cash crops which are now in surplus in this country. I should not say that soybeans are in surplus but corn and wheat are presenting some difficulties with respect to prices.

I must not take too long on this topic, but I am sure that a planning committee could also take a good look at the plight of the soybean growers in southwestern Ontario and try to find ways and means of doing something to help the production of soybeans. We now grow about 5 million bushels of soybeans in Canada but we import twice that many, approximately 10 million bushels. Therefore, the 250,000 acres which we use for the production of soybeans in southwestern Ontario could be trebled and again that would take a very great deal of pressure off winter wheat and corn, both of which we have in abundant supply.

Our soybeans have a two cents a pound tariff against them going into the United States. In other words, if we undertake to ship a bushel of soybeans into the United States it would cost \$1.20 for the tariff but soybeans are permitted to come from the United States into Canada subject to no duty at all. There is a small amount of duty payable on soybean oil coming from the United States to Canada but there is no duty on soybeans. The suggestion has been made that the tariff should be adjusted to put us on an equal footing with the United States.

Another difficulty in the agricultural picture in southwestern Ontario is the matter of the price of corn. Four years ago the price of corn was approximately \$1.75 or \$1.80 a bushel. The cost of raising corn has gone up. It costs more today to raise a bushel of corn than it did four years ago but the price of corn has dropped today and the farmers in my area are getting only about 90 cents a bushel, almost half the price corn commanded four years ago.

This illustrates what the farmers of this country are up against. It is admitted that the farmers are having a tough time and I am sure a planning commission could take these matters into consideration and if necessary make recommendations to the government. However, a planning commission is not really necessary in this respect because as is already indicated on the order paper the government within a very few days will bring legislation before parliament seeking to grant relief to the hard-pressed farmers. I am sure it is a matter of joy and pride to every hon. member of this house that we have a government which has the interests of the farmers so much at heart.

Mr. Castleden: There is no resolution yet.

Mr. Argue: Six weeks too late.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): Dealing further with the matter of a planning commission, although I do not come from southern British Columbia or even from Winnipeg North Centre, I can still use my imagination as to what such a body could accomplish.

Mr. Fisher: What about tobacco?

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): All joking aside, this country is faced with many problems that require a great deal of thought and study. I am reminded of the time about 25 years ago when Canada faced a great crisis in the form of the depression. At that time we were also blessed with a government with great vision and imagination and the best of intentions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): Some of our friends laugh but I will deal with them in a moment. I wish now to remind hon. members of some of the good planning that was done by the Conservative government of that day. It brought in the Natural Products Marketing Act. That act is the basis of most of our provincial legislation today dealing with the marketing of farm products. That act was passed in 1934. The Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act was also passed which helped the hard-pressed farmers out of the difficulties in which they found themselves at that