

Agreements Respecting Marginal Lands

used to serve U.S. potatoes in Hungarian refugee camps in British Columbia?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That question surely does not deserve an answer.

Mr. Pigeon: It is one that hurts, isn't it? (Text):

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I regret I was not in my seat during the earlier part of this debate and therefore missed the opportunity of hearing what was said by the hon. member for Essex East. I always listen with interest to his speeches on agricultural matters. My interest originated some years ago when the hon. member spoke in my constituency during one of the election campaigns of 1957 or 1958. He made a speech which fortunately for me in connection with the next election still lingers in the memory of the people and the farmers of the Peace river country. I believe the text of his message was that the farmers in the last two or three years had never had it so good. I am sure the hon. member will forgive me if I say that his speech recalls to my mind Edwin Markham's poem "The Man With the Hoe". I frequently think of that poem when the hon. member speaks on agricultural matters. I understand I am taking some poetic licence, but the first few lines, as hon. members will recall, go something like this:

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.

I always think that that well describes the hon. member when he speaks on agricultural matters.

This afternoon the hon. member for Assiniboia gave his views on this resolution. I think they consisted merely of a repetition of the threadbare, shop-worn clichés which for so many years he has been attempting to suggest contain the elements which are required by the agricultural industry for its betterment and improvement. For one who aspires to wear the toga of the leader of this new party he is far from giving us information on what are the true facts today.

It is recognized by responsible agricultural statesmen in both Canada and the United States that some of the measures which the hon. member has suggested may, it is true, have some slight or temporary palliative effects, but the true remedies lie much deeper than those. There are far more fundamental changes which require to be made

[Mr. Pigeon.]

and this, I think, is certainly accepted by this government in this measure which is a part of the pattern of change which has been emerging step by step and stage by stage, to indicate that the government has steadfastly in front of it the problems, and the solutions of those problems, of the small men of this country, the men who under the last government were the forgotten men.

This is a very important resolution, Mr. Chairman. When you read it and analyse it you find that it proposes measures which, if implemented by legislation, in due course, will have far-reaching, deep and fundamental effects. As I read the resolution I find it can be divided into a number of proposals. It authorizes the Minister of Agriculture:

To enter into agreements with provincial governments or agencies thereof for the undertaking jointly with those governments or agencies of projects for the alternative uses of lands that are marginal or of low productivity,—

That has been dealt with to some extent, and I think it will be dealt with in this debate by other hon. members.

Second—and this is the area that I propose to deal with—the resolution goes on:

—projects for the development of income and employment opportunities in rural agricultural areas, and projects for the development and conservation of the soil and water resources of Canada;—

It is true that at this time there are areas of this country in which, because of impoverishment of the soil, because of the uneconomic size of the farm units, because of world markets and for other reasons the owners and occupants of farms are not achieving the standard of living which we feel they should have. I think we should not forget—and this is where the wisdom of this resolution comes in—that it is equally important to make provision to ensure that the areas which can provide for their owners a reasonable and adequate standard of living are not relegated to the lower brackets.

There is a tendency in any industry involving the development of natural resources for a certain pattern to emerge. If conditions are not good there is a tendency to intensify and concentrate on the production of wealth from natural resources, and the inevitable result is, as we have seen in many parts of the world, the development of a surplus of goods produced from those particular natural resources. Sometimes the natural resources become worn out or depleted, with a consequent lowering of the standards of living of the people engaged in the utilization of those natural resources. It is therefore most essential that we establish a flexible program to ensure stability, and an increase in the standard of living, and to provide for a more variable and sophisticated type of production