

sents many of our thorniest problems. There are many in rural Canada to-day who feel that Canadian agriculture is actually one of our war casualties. The surplus products, excluding wheat, which were so widely heralded in peace time have now become a thing of the past in many sections of rural Canada. Is it not, Mr. Speaker, a shocking thing to contemplate that in one of the world's greatest agricultural producing areas, ration cards should be used for butter, with some hint that rationing of beef is to follow? I think I need do no more than simply point out the fact. Is it not a shocking condition of affairs? Every butter ration coupon that is handed to a grocer to-day is mute but irrefutable evidence of faulty planning by our agricultural and our war-time prices boards. I suggest to the Prime Minister—I hope I am not making too many suggestions to him—that he drop into a few rural homes in Canada, talk to some of the farmers' wives and see what they say of a plan which requires not only consumers to have ration coupons before they can get their butter, but the farmers' wives as well. I ask the Prime Minister to get the right point of view with respect to that. I am sure it must have escaped his attention; otherwise he would not have allowed a thing of this kind to be done. It is one of the most monumental examples of lack of government foresight that we have had in Canada for many a long day.

Someone has said that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, but certainly rationing is the last refuge of governmental inefficiency. I should have thought that the conditions existing in agriculture to-day would have so greatly concerned the government that the speech from the throne would at least have mentioned it. Apparently, however, his excellency has been wrongly advised in the only advice which his ministers have given him. They have told him—and this is our plan for agriculture; this is what we are going to do for the farmers—that they have begun to explore the situation. Well, exploration is a good thing, but you have to have something more than exploration for agriculture just now. The speech says that the government—have already begun to explore the international agreements and domestic measures which will help to secure adequate incomes for primary producers and full employment after the war.

It will not be very good news to the farmers of Canada if this means that the war must cease before these injustices are remedied. The farmer has felt, at any rate a good many of them have told me, as they have told other members of this house, that he is the forgotten man in Canada's economy.

I am sorry that we are not remembering the farmer, more particularly in the speech from the throne.

When prices were frozen for the purpose of avoiding a spiral of inflation in Canada during this war-time period, that policy actually froze, so far as agriculture is concerned, an inequality in national income, in a way which left agriculture no longer in a position to make its proper contribution to our war effort. We should regard the production of food in much the same way as we regard any other sort of production of war materials. If it has been so regarded by the government, then agriculture has been treated differently from other types of war industries. From the beginning of the war until now, experienced labour on farms has gradually but surely disappeared. It is almost a thing of the past to get an experienced man for farm work. I do not know where you will find such a man; certainly you will not find him where I come from, and I do not think you will find him in any other area in Canada. The ceiling price on wholesale farm products has operated in many instances towards a reduction in the production of necessary agricultural commodities in Canada. I do not think hon. members, particularly those who come from rural sections, need to look into dry statistics, to establish the fact that farmers in the aggregate are receiving a ridiculously low and inadequate share of the national income. As a matter of fact, over thirty per cent of the population—for that is what agriculture represents—has less than fifteen per cent of the national income diverted to it.

It is, I think, a mild statement that there is grave dissatisfaction in rural Canada at the moment. It is all very well to say that the prices of farm products have gone up. Of course they have gone up in some instances. But I say to the Prime Minister that it is not a healthy thing for the Canadian farmer to pick up his newspaper and see the striking difference between the price he receives for his cattle and his hogs and that which his American farmer cousin across the border is receiving in the Chicago and Buffalo markets.

Right now the government's programme is of course for greater production in some lines of agricultural commodities, but the farmer looks with grave concern upon that appeal. Last year we were unable to meet our agreement with Britain, in certain periods in any event, so far as bacon and eggs were concerned; and meat and butter are now providing a serious shortage problem in the domestic field. The farmers, through their organizations and individually, have from time to time, since the war began, called for a reasonably long-term agricultural production