

Agricultural Policies

taken into consideration and if recommendations are not made and implemented, we are heading for a situation still more serious and more disastrous. It is likely that people will then be inclined to listen to the leader, without knowing why, and I think it is where it may become dangerous.

To turn back to agriculture and to prove that it is a basic industry, an essential one, I should like to quote a few figures. Total farming investments amount to about \$22.4 billion, nearly \$41,000 per worker, and break down as follows: 71 per cent for real estate, 18 per cent for machinery and 11 per cent for live-stock and poultry. Crop fields cover a total of 174 million acres, of which 76 per cent are owned by farmers and 24 per cent are rented.

New capital investments amount to nearly \$1 billion annually, that is approximately 8 per cent of the total of new investments in Canada. The Farm Credit Corporation, a government agency, is the main source for mortgage loans and it stands for two thirds of the total amount.

This means therefore that agriculture does not get its fair share, because farmers are obliged to mortgage their farm buildings to the Corporation for two thirds of their value.

In 1948 1,096,000 people were employed in agriculture, that is 22 per cent of the total labour force in Canada then. Today, there are about 546,000, that is 7 per cent of the total labour force.

Since 1951, the number of farm workers has remained more or less stationary at about 500,000 which, in 1968, was 18 per cent of the total labour force.

According to Mr. Furnis, an economist, the main change in Canada's agricultural economy since 1944 has been the increasing dependency of the non-farm sector on supply and services. About 338,000 people are now employed in food processing industries, tobacco plants, in the production of leather goods, machinery and fertilizers as well as in the wholesale trade of farm products.

About 18 per cent of all the products shipped by rail are farm products, thus proving the importance of agriculture. The transportation industry provides jobs for a great many workers. One fourth of all the products shipped through the St. Lawrence Seaway, are farm products. The consumption of gas, diesel oil and lubricants accounts for 17 per cent of the total sales of all fuel used by cars and trucks.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

In the wholesale trade, 52,000 people which means about one person out of four, are involved in the sale of farm products, food commodities and farm supplies.

In 1967, agriculture accounted for \$2.5 billion or 4.6 per cent of the gross national product which totalled at that time \$54 billion. Agriculture is still the main primary industry of Canada, coming ahead of lumber, fisheries, mines and oil.

• (12:50 p.m.)

Employment in agriculture represented 7.3 per cent of the total, slightly more than its contribution to the GNP. That is characteristic of the industry, the average income being slightly lower in agriculture than in other sectors.

Last year, Canadian exports of farm products amounted to \$1¼ billion, roughly 11 per cent of total exports, compared with 20 per cent in the early 60s. That means that we are losing rather than gaining ground in the field of exports.

Canadian farmers paid approximately \$175 million in property tax last year, of which 60 per cent in income tax. It is therefore obvious that the property tax is very unfair.

To my mind, the buildings and the land should be exempted from tax seeing they are the work tools of the farmer. The doctor who goes around with his small bag to visit the sick pays taxes on his income. The income of the farmer can be taxed, but he should not be taxed for walking on the ground or going about on the roads. Yet, he pays taxes on his income as well as on his house.

In a just society, people should not have to pay taxes on their homes, because after all they have to live somewhere. The land and the buildings should also be exempt from taxes to allow the farmers to breathe and continue cultivating their land with a view to meeting the basic needs of their family without always needing subsidies, to the extent where farmers are said to be beggars, people who are always asking the state for something.

Therefore, we should not blame those who are hungry, who wish to live—

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but I am afraid his time has expired.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member might be permitted to continue until one o'clock.