

Supply—Agriculture

Mr. Blackmore: I am sure my hon. friend is in favour of it. His province wisely has made provision for it, but the other provinces have not done so.

Mr. Pouliot: If my hon. friend permits me, now that he has come to the thing that is damaging, would he explain this?

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I do not like to interrupt this highly interesting conversation, but I think perhaps the committee feels as I do that the time has now arrived when the hon. member for Lethbridge should be permitted to deliver the address which he indicated it was his intention to deliver, and which he is not going to have time to deliver because all this time taken by interruptions, of course, is charged up to him. I would suggest to the committee that the hon. member for Lethbridge now be permitted to proceed with his address.

Mr. Blackmore: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, but let me remind you that we are in committee, and every time I am interrupted I have 40 minutes following the interruption. It does not do any harm. As a matter of fact, as I have said, I think the questions coming to me from the hon. member for Temiscouata are the very best thing we can have at this time, because it is very easy for us to sit while a member is speaking and not pay much attention to what he is saying. The result is that we do not get much out of the discussion whereas, as a matter of fact, we must get the maximum out of the discussion of agriculture if the Minister of Agriculture is going to be supported as he ought to be. He wants all these difficulties brought before the country so that he does not have to tell about all the problems.

The hon. member for Temiscouata asked if there was another kind of food we get from outside our country in respect of which submarines could seriously injure us. I point to sugar. We in Canada are able to produce on land in Canada all the sugar we can possibly use. We could establish factories and produce two and a half times as much sugar as the Dominion of Canada could possibly use, in Alberta alone south of High River; but we cannot produce the sugar there at the present time because no subsidy is allowed to transport it to Ontario, Quebec and farther east. The result is that we cannot supply the market there, so we cannot produce the sugar; but as far as physical conditions are concerned we can produce the sugar.

Meanwhile we are buying our sugar from far-off places, from which the sugar has to come to us in ships. These ships could be

[Mr. Pouliot.]

sunk. Every member in the house will recall how serious was the shortage of sugar in world war II, and how we had to be regimented in our use of it. It went on for a long time. Surely we are drifting right into that danger again just as though we had not seen it.

That is another example. There are plenty of others, but I am sure these two are enough to illustrate my point. I hope the hon. member will feel he is free to ask questions. I shall be glad to have him ask them, because I have given this matter of agriculture considerable thought. I was born on a farm, I grew up on a farm, all my connections are with farming and I know farming inside and out as far as my own area is concerned. I do not know Quebec farming. I do not know the farming problems of the maritimes, but I know the farming problems of southern Alberta and in a general way they are a fairly accurate indication of conditions throughout the country.

I have mentioned six dangers which we face, and they are serious dangers. Whichever way we look they are lurking. To illustrate the dangers of American competition let us go down to the United States now so we will not feel we are being too personal. Here is the United States with vast surpluses of many different kinds of commodities, to which I shall refer shortly. She is faced with the problem of either restricting her production in respect of many agricultural commodities or finding some way or other of selling these commodities abroad. We in Canada are rapidly approaching the same position if we liberate the productive capacities of our agricultural industry.

The question we have to ask is the same one Secretary Benson is asking himself: shall we restrict the production of wheat and other commodities on our farms, or shall we encourage the farmers to go ahead and produce all they can and take care of the goods as they are produced? We are faced with exactly the same problem in Canada. Out in the west, for example, if we had had the kind of bumper crop in 1954 that we had in 1953 you can just imagine the condition we would have been in. What shall we do? Now is the time we have to decide, and the Minister of Agriculture should not have to take the whole problem on his shoulders. That is why we are discussing the matter, and what I am saying tonight is in no way critical of the Minister of Agriculture. I do not hesitate to say that I believe the Minister of Agriculture has handled the situation in the country superbly, but he has been restricted and limited in every sort of direction and manner.