

Canadian Centennial

trying to protect both flanks. The reader has to go along carefully since there is some imagination used in drawing up the resolution.

In so far as the resolution contains any element of lack of confidence in the present government, I am strongly opposed to it. I do not think it is necessary to set up a committee to usurp the functions of government. We have a wonderful government led by the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) who enjoys the confidence of the people of Canada probably to a greater extent than any prime minister has enjoyed the confidence of our people for a long time—

Mr. Byrne: That is a conservation speech.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): —surrounded by a wonderful cabinet, and I should like to express my personal confidence in that government.

Mr. Argue: Afraid of the next nomination?

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): And I am sure that this government can undertake the duties of government in as fine a manner and with as great an ability as any commission which could be set up.

However, in so far as this resolution is intended as a genuine contribution to the future planning of our country I would give it at least qualified support. Planning is necessary, whether on an individual level, on a corporate level or at the level of government. We cannot get along without planning and I could conceive circumstances in which were we to have an overall planning commission it could serve as something in the nature of a continuing royal commission, set up at least in part in the same manner, and charged with the responsibilities of inquiring into those different features and aspects and phases of our economy and social life which come up for consideration at frequent intervals.

We have just appointed a royal commission to inquire into our power resources and to make recommendations concerning them and if we had a royal commission or a planning committee set up in the same way to which could be referred questions of all kinds which affect our economy or our social life—not for legislative or administrative action but for review and report—I can see where benefit could be derived for the people of this country.

Now before I get lost here—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Argue: No imagination.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): —I know I can get some of our farming problems into [Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West).]

this resolution somewhere without being out of order. I would say if we had such a planning committee at the present time to which we could refer such matters as the sugar beet problem which is troubling a great many people in four different areas of Canada it would be a very good thing.

Mr. Byrne: Better talk to your government about that problem.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): These areas include southern Manitoba, southwestern Ontario and southern Alberta in addition to certain parts of the province of Quebec. We import in the form of raw sugar approximately 80 per cent of our requirements in Canada. We produce through our sugar beet industry approximately 18 per cent and the other approximately 2 per cent, during the last three or four years only, has been imported in the form of refined sugar. Now it is that 2 per cent, coming in in the form of refined sugar, which is causing trouble to our sugar beet growers inasmuch as virtually that whole quantity of refined sugar is being imported into the Hamilton area in southwestern Ontario and is being used to undersell our beet sugar produced in the Chatham-Wallaceburg area.

The importation of refined sugar was stopped by the Bennett administration back in 1932, during the depression.

Mr. Byrne: A lot of things were stopped then.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): It did not bother Canada again until 1952. For 20 years the effect of the Bennett action on the sugar question had lasted to the benefit of Canadian producers and then, in 1952, refined sugar began to be imported from Cuba.

Mr. Byrne: Taking candy from the kiddies.

Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West): It was, through negotiation, stopped again and as far as Cuba is concerned is still stopped, but other nations are now beginning to unload, particularly Mexico and some other Central American countries, who are exporting quantities of refined sugar into Canada.

The sugar beet growers are asking for a support price of \$14 per ton under sugar and part of the idea behind that request is the feeling that if we had support prices, under the general agreement on tariffs and trade, the Canadian government would then be justified in placing refined sugar on a quota basis and preventing its importation to undercut our sugar beet growers in this country.