

fathers and mothers were in their late thirties or early forties, and they were able to carry on the work of the farm. Many of those boys did not come back, and in some instances, because they did not come back, the fathers and mothers, now from sixty to seventy years of age, are still on the farms attempting to carry on. They are in a classification which was referred to this morning by a delegation that met the government, when it was suggested that these people should be encouraged to dispose of their farms and get others on the land who could produce more effectively because of their younger years. The government has gone so far as to record all the people in Canada who are in that classification, and I think I said to this house last year that there are about seventy thousand farms in Canada occupied by persons over sixty years of age.

Labour began to be a limiting factor in certain industrial areas adjacent to cities in the second year of the war. You will recall that in the first year of the war there was a great deal of uncertainty, particularly during the first six months, but in the latter part of the first year industry was organized, and in the second year of the war men rushed into plants from farms surrounding industrial centres. I would ask hon. members the question: what did this house want them to do? I reply by stating that while I was not one of those who were fully convinced before I went to England in the fall of 1940, I came back to this country convinced that every possible man and woman in Canada had to be got into a plant that might produce munitions of war, or machines or ships, at the earliest possible day, if we were to win the war. We did not as a government go out and tell the farmers not to go into plants. We did not say, you must not go. We encouraged them to go, and if any member is able to stand in this house, as a member did the other night, and point to the production of munitions and supplies in Canada as one of the greatest accomplishments of this war, it has resulted from the fact that these men and women were not prevented by any means, directive or otherwise, from going to these plants and producing in volume at the earliest possible time.

What has been the result? Not long ago I was speaking in Saskatoon to a group of farmers. I had been asked the question that I am putting here, a question that has been asked in the house on numerous occasions since this debate began: Is there going to be an over all farm labour shortage this year? I had to say that we had been building up our objectives year after year

[Mr. Gardiner.]

while the number of persons on the farms has been going down year by year; we have not yet reached the peak of production under these conditions, and until we have done so I cannot say with absolute assurance that lack of labour will prevent us from reaching our objectives this year. I have this to say as well—and every member of this house, on both sides of the house, knows it is a fact—for eight years before this war started, there were boys and girls brought up on farms who never intended to remain on the farm. They had been directed, from their childhood up, towards some other activity, but they found it impossible to get off the farm. While we counted our unemployed in Canada at one time at something in the neighbourhood of a million, if we had counted the young men and young women who were on the farms unemployed, or partly unemployed because they could not find employment elsewhere, the figure would have been increased by the 250,000 or the number who have left the farms and gone into industry and elsewhere. With regard to overall production, our farms to-day, with these 250,000 gone, are producing more than they ever produced before.

I have eulogized the old people who have been left on the farms and the boys and girls who have worked on the farms. I have spoken of their long hours, beginning at four or five in the morning and ending at ten o'clock at night, particularly for the mothers. That does not answer anything. It should not be necessary to work from four in the morning until ten at night to earn a living on a farm, and that is one of the things which we must remove in that glorious day so many talk about that we are going to have after the war. I hope we shall be able to remove the necessity for some of these long hours. But whether we eulogize them or not, the fact remains that they did the job and produced the food, and they are going out this year to attempt to do the same thing.

A delegation of men came to me and said, "We produced every bit of live stock and dairy products last year that we could produce with the labour on our farms." I said, "What are you here for?" They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "We are not asking you to produce any more. If you are producing all the live stock on your farm that you can possibly produce with the labour you have, nobody is asking you to produce more with that labour; but the fact remains that right in Saskatchewan one-fifth of the area is delivering only one hog on the average from every two farms, and I want these people to feed more hogs." These men said immediate-