

reduced by 50 per cent; half the herds had to be slaughtered. The result is being felt in the whole province of Quebec. In fact, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) told us we would have to import butter.

● (5:20 p.m.)

That is the reason why. Our area is productive, it is an excellent dairying region, but this year it will not be able to produce. It needs government assistance. Our farmers, with government assistance from both governments, can improve their lot, provided the governments face facts and put an end to playing politics and come to their help before they are forced to kill off their herds. That is the first reason.

There is another one, namely that the farmer does not live off agriculture, when he is half-farmer, and half-lumberjack. I lived through that period, for I am the son of a farmer. We had eight lots and yet we could not live off them. There were 16 children in the family and we could not live off the land. Such is the case with 60 per cent of our present-day farmers, especially since the last great depression. Lumbering was very easy. Father stayed home and four, five or six of his sons went to the lumber camps to get the money needed on the farm to buy tools and animals; the land was farmed a little, for the fun of it, just enough to obtain the required food. We never at that time considered making a living from the produce of the land.

What has happened, especially in the last 25 years? Lumber companies have grown modern, they were forced to do away with roughly two-thirds of their labour. Two-thirds of the lumbermen, two-thirds of these farmers' sons who used to go earn the money needed for their farms were laid off, because of mechanization, because logging was modernized. Some companies—there are four lumber companies in our area—that used to hire from 10,000 to 12,000 men hired 1,500 men this year. All those farmers' sons left the farm. They had to, naturally, because the governments, the members of parliament did not follow the march of progress. They failed to orient these farmers' sons in time. The latter were forced to quit the land; often the family head remained alone with his lots. Too old to farm them; he had to let them go. After eight, nine, ten years, unable to find a buyer, it would have cost too much to rehabilitate the land into production and he had to abandon it for lack of help from the government.

Rural Development

I feel that that is the reason why today people talk about the land having been deserted. It reminds me of the days during the depression where cities were being emptied and people sent to our farms; from that time on our area developed.

They developed those farms and, today, we have exactly the opposite. That same population is leaving to go back to the city. Why? Because when the father no longer gets unemployment insurance, he must get social assistance. He must be a tenant in the city. Note well: he has to be a tenant in the city. Formerly, to obtain social assistance, he had to go to the farm. This year, in order to get social welfare, he must be a tenant in the city because if he stays on the farm, without work, without any possibility of farming it, he will get no assistance. It is impossible for him to get any; he is told: "Go to the city, leave the farm, and then you can get help."

In the province of Quebec, 60 per cent of our farmers are in that position.

For four years now, I have been fighting in this house but I do not yet want to blame the government 100 per cent. We talk, but talk always ricochets. We try to advise the Minister of Forestry, so that when he meets our good agriculture minister in Quebec, he might make him understand what we have been harping on for four years. If the same assistance were given a family going to the city—it is expensive in the city—if the same welfare cheque were given to have it stay on the farm, that family would be much better off, because it would have a garden and keep some cattle, etc.

But no. We are doing the opposite of what was being done during the depression and we are doing the nonsensical thing, with the result that in my home town, 40 per cent of the population is getting welfare. These people come from all the small parishes because they cannot have welfare assistance at home. They give up their farms, give everything up and come to our town to try to survive.

If the amount of money we are voting today were liable to help the farmer who does not want to go into town, but who is forced by circumstances to do so, or to give him assistance that would at least help him start earning a livelihood on his land and, later on, to increase his holdings, we would have the satisfaction of knowing that we have been generous, because the minister is well aware that today, a farmer cannot live on 100 acres of land, he must increase his holdings.