

*War Appropriation—Agriculture*

Mr. GARDINER: In view of the fact that the Minister of Labour and his department are dealing with this problem, which was put up to them by the Department of Labour, perhaps the minister would state in a few words what the position is.

Mr. MITCHELL: My hon. friend knows the situation in the packing industry. He knows there has been a tremendous increase in the production of live stock in this country. Speaking approximately, there are now 4,000 more people engaged in the packing industry than there were at the outbreak of war. I recently returned from the United States, where we had a discussion of problems affecting the agricultural industry, and a similar situation exists there. My hon. friend raises the issue of equal pay for equal work. The national war labour board has laid down certain guiding principles. The organization to which my hon. friend refers has the right to appear before either a regional board or the national board, whichever jurisdiction may cover its particular problem. I do not think the question is one which can be discussed in detail in committee of this house. Whatever case the applicants can make before the board, in conformity with the wage stabilization policy of this country, the board will consider and render a decision upon. If it is a regional board question the parties have the right of appeal to the national board, whose determination is final.

There was some talk, I believe, of a slow-down strike in a plant in Edmonton; I think it was the Burns plant. The matter involved was one of provincial jurisdiction, coming under what I think is called the wages and industry board of Alberta, and my information is that Mr. Clayton Adams, chairman of the board, discussed the issues involved in the slow-down in Edmonton; that the slow-down stopped last Friday; that at the present moment negotiations are taking place between employers and employees in that particular industry, and that it was expected that a conclusion would be reached to-day or tomorrow.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: I can take it from the minister's reply that the answer to my question is: no, there is not at the present time equal pay for women for equal work.

Mr. MITCHELL: My hon. friend is not going to put words like that in my mouth.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Then would the minister just answer the question?

Mr. MITCHELL: That is all right; I know that is good campaign material out in the country, but the hon. member is not going to get away with that.

[Mr. Castleden.]

Mr. CASTLEDEN: And probably I shall not get an answer to my question.

Mr. MITCHELL: My hon. friend does not need to worry about that either. I was describing the process of labour negotiation in this country. I do not know neither does my hon. friend or he would not have asked the question what will be the outcome until this particular organization has made its case before the regional board in Alberta. If they feel that an appeal to the national board would be a just exercise of their rights, no doubt they will appeal. I do not think either my hon. friend or myself can answer a question of that description.

Mr. WRIGHT: The Minister of Agriculture stated a moment ago that he thought that some of the responsibility for the securing of this help rested with the farm organizations of western Canada, that they should supply some help from the farms to the packing plants. I cannot agree with him about that.

Mr. GARDINER: I did not say that some of the responsibility rested upon them. I said that they had been asked for their cooperation and that they had granted it.

Mr. WRIGHT: Absolutely. It seems to me that they might be made available in seasons of the year when they are not needed on the farms. But there are a number of industries in Canada which are less essential than agriculture.

Mr. GARDINER: Some of the fellows who come out of them would not be of much use, on short notice.

Mr. WRIGHT: They probably would have as much experience in the packing plants as some of the people who are taken from the farms.

Mr. GARDINER: Not at throwing something around as heavy as a hog.

Mr. WRIGHT: I have been through a great many packing plants, and I have not seen any man having to throw around a hog. Today things are done pretty well by mechanism.

Mr. GARDINER: He is a lot better man if he can do it.

Mr. WRIGHT: No; strength is not the main factor. That is borne out by the fact that a number of women have been taken into these plants and are displacing men. I strongly suggest to the Minister of Labour that he make a survey to discover if there are not other industries from which men can be drawn instead of asking the farmers of western Canada to supply more labour, especially in the summer time.

Mr. MITCHELL: I am not going to get into a discussion of selective service, which