

For this reason we are absolutely in favour of this legislation to enable the farmers to group themselves in cooperatives. We appreciate also the creation of the advisory committee that has been authorized under the Dairy Industry Act, which probably will assist the industry to take cognizance of its own difficulties. Nevertheless we claim that these measures do not go far enough. Under this section the initial price to be paid, supposing there should be a cooperative formed in a certain district, may not exceed eighty per cent of the average wholesale price of such product during the preceding three years. We are well satisfied to have this payment guaranteed and the cooperative assisted by the government in financing its operations; nevertheless this will not yield a return which will give the butter or cheese producer a revenue equal to the cost of production.

Consequently there is no doubt that the industry would urge upon the government a fixed price, which I suppose would have to be paid on butter fat. This fixed price should not be less than 28 cents per pound of butter fat, which would mean 30 or 31 cent butter and 15 cent cheese. That is more nearly in line with what the cost of production has been shown to be. If, considering the problems of agriculture as a whole, it is wise to fix the price of one commodity, whether in the east or in the west, we believe it is wise also that prices should be fixed for other agricultural commodities which are equally important. I do not intend to move an amendment to any part of this legislation, in the first place because under the rules and regulations of the house a private member is not permitted to do so. Still we want to draw the attention of the minister and of parliament to the fact that this matter is becoming more and more urgent. As one hon. member from British Columbia said a moment ago, the dairy industry is as badly off as the wheat industry. I believe that at the present time those engaged in dairying are anxious to learn where the money is coming from to pay the cost of fixing the price of a certain commodity. It has to come from the population at large, and though the dairymen are selling at less than the cost of production, still a levy will be placed upon them, directly or indirectly, to subsidize the production of another agricultural commodity.

We might go a step further and say it is not wise to fix the price of wheat because of the growing surplus of that commodity and the doubt as to whether we shall be able to dispose of that wheat in the markets of the world. Yesterday I heard some hon. members state that the cooperative legislation in regard

to wheat was unnecessary and would not serve the purpose intended. I claim that at this moment it is more necessary than ever before, but it is just as necessary that similar treatment be afforded other branches of agriculture in order that farmers may receive treatment which will place them all on about the same footing. Many believe that farmers are entitled to a fixed price about equal to the cost of production, in order to place agriculture in the same position as industry, where the cost of production is all-important. Construction organizations fix wages for the labourer, the carpenter, the bricklayer and so on. To-day the farmer is the only man who has to sell his produce in the open market without being protected in any way, while at the same time he must buy his machinery and supplies in a highly protected market.

This, I suppose, has always been the situation in regard to agriculture, but I do not see why the wheat growers could not get together with the dairy farmers to see if something could not be done which would be satisfactory to all concerned. I should like to give a warning to those interested in agriculture, that if the wheat growers go too far and ask too much, while other branches of agriculture claim they are not treated fairly, this may happen: It must be remembered that after all in Canada there are far more counties interested in the dairy industry than there are counties interested in the production of wheat, and it would be very easy simply to out-vote the influence that has been brought to bear on this house during the last few years. This has not been done because we want to hold Canada together and help those really in need. We have not criticized any assistance that has been given the west; the people of the east have always been in favour of helping the wheat growers, but in our opinion this fixing of prices favours one part of the dominion as against another, one part of the industry of agriculture as against another. We are very much afraid that unless the government takes cognizance of this fact, the dairy industry will become bankrupt, hundreds and thousands of farmers will simply go out of business, and more people will have to go on relief in the cities. At the very least those engaged in the dairy industry will see that their representatives use what means are available to assure that they receive at least the cost of production.

I make this statement at this time because this appeared to be the most suitable opportunity. When Bill No. 63 is under consideration, fixing the price of wheat, I shall have another statement to make. At the moment,