

The Chairman : That was considered, and it was thought undesirable to adopt that plan. The three minutes was allowed in order that the questioner might state his reasons for asking the question, and as a guide to the writer of the paper as to the nature of the answer required.

Farming or Primary Industries : Report of Delegation representing Workers.

Mr. W. Nash read the following paper on "Farming or Primary Industries," being the report of the delegation representing the workers :—

The Prime Minister, in outlining the procedure to be adopted at the forthcoming Conference, has stated in a few well-chosen words that the real objective of the proposed discussion is to find the answer to "The problems of obtaining industrial peace and industrial efficiency, with a fair distribution of the national income." From the workers' point of view, "Industrial peace" depends upon the fair distribution of the national income. "National efficiency" is a relative term, and, whilst we do not suggest that the New Zealand worker has attained the maximum of efficiency, we are of opinion that he can be classed among the most efficient. We are, however, living in an age of machinery. We have spent millions of pounds on hydro-electricity, which is one of the most adaptable of all powers, and which will soon be available in every sphere of industry, and we should now discard the old idea of a worker as a manual worker only. Electrical energy and machinery are the *workers*, and the man the controlling factor. We should look to machinery and electrical power to relieve man of some of the drudgery of life—we should place man supreme as the brain of machinery, to attain the maximum of production. Nature has been exceedingly lavish to this Dominion in all those factors which are necessary to primary production. We are certainly thirteen thousand miles from our main market (Great Britain), but this handicap is largely offset by the quality of our lands, by a climate and rainfall that is the envy of our competitors, and by access to fertilizers in Ocean and Nauru Islands by which we can maintain the fertility which has already done so much for New Zealand.

We are of opinion that the next step this Dominion should take, if it wants to regain the road to prosperity and do away with unemployment, is to stimulate land development, as distinct from land settlement or land speculation. It is no longer a question only of breaking in the land, but it is a question of developing land so as to get from it the greatest possible return, and this can only be assured by entrusting this work to men who understand it, and by making available to them all possible facilities and equipment. It appears to us that farmers have a right to demand the assistance of the State in providing these facilities and equipment, and that the State has an equal right to demand from the farmer such use of the land facilities and equipment as will give the greatest possible return.

Compared with the earlier years of the Dominion's history farming is no longer necessarily a life of isolation or drudgery. Modern methods of transport, the telephone, wireless, and above all the uses to which electric energy can be put in farming, have made it possible to make work in the country no more irksome than is work in the towns. With these modern developments it ought to be possible—we think it is possible—to carry on the work of farming and ensure to all engaged in it ample leisure to enable them to enjoy social life to the degree that the worker in both town and country is entitled. If that were done, the "drift to the towns" which has been so much in evidence of late years would be checked; for, while the towns can supply certain enjoyments which the country cannot, life in the country under conditions which could be provided to-day has certain attractions which the towns can never provide.

Land development and utilization are, however, only parts of the problem. In the dairying industry the average yield of butterfat from the stock of the Dominion is near to 180 lb. per head. The dairy-farmer with average costs of production is to-day finding it difficult to get a reasonable return for his labour on this average. The country cannot afford to allow this to continue. The possibilities of efficient land and stock utilization for dairying purposes are shown by the fact that there are individual farmers in every province, and a group of farmers (twenty-six in number) in the Manuwa district whose herds have averaged over 300 lb. of butterfat per head. With scientific management and careful culling the butterfat yield should show in a few years a much higher average than the present one of 180 lb., with corresponding increase in export values. The added returns would be nearly all net profit available for either reinvestment in improvements or raising the standard of living of those engaged in dairy production. The average dairy-farmer is not getting full service from the capital invested in his plant and stock, and this in turn reacts detrimentally on the national dividend.

The output of the dairy factories in the Dominion would be largely increased if the farms already settled were adequately drained, grassed, and fertilized. The extra output would not entail any additional expenditure on new roads or bridges, a very small increase of equipment in the factories, and practically no extra cost to the farmer for stock and machinery.

Land development or efficient utilization is dependent on the knowledge and competency of the farmer, and every step that leads to education in this field should be stimulated and encouraged. Scientific research and the technical application of the research knowledge is the fundamental basis upon which modern development of our industries—manufacturing, mining, transport, and agriculture—must rest. The productivity of industry is greatly increased by the application of the results of scientific research. The health and well-being of the community is determined by the degree to which the available knowledge is applied. The value to the nation of scientific research is many times greater than its cost. The increased productivity of industry resulting from scientific research is one of the most potent factors in the ever-increasing struggle of the workers to raise their standard of living. Social justice, to which the Conference is aiming, demands that the results of this enhanced productivity shall be made available to raise the general standard of life.

It may be asked, Is this pertinent to the question of industrial relationships, or a national industrial Conference? We say it is. If it is legitimate for the farmers to criticize the wages of the workers, his standard and cost of living—to occasionally accuse him of going slow, of