

*Supply—Agriculture*

I am not going to attempt to quarrel with the statistics that were placed on the record last night by the Minister of Finance that there was a 24 per cent increase in net income or any other official statistics that are produced by the minister or by the departments of the government. I would think that they would have to examine those statistics most carefully before they would really dare bring them into the House of Commons as authentic statistics. I think, however, the main reason, or one of the main reasons certainly, for the change in the net income position is the general explosion of production that has taken place in the agricultural industry. The Minister of Agriculture emphasizes different points at different times. At different times he rises in his place and tells us that all is well with agriculture, or all is better with agriculture than it has been since 1951. At other times in other speeches he points out that production is very high; that unless producers are careful to refrain from further increases in production, or in fact to cut back production, the government's policy would have to be one of reducing prices or reducing support.

We have had a tremendous increase in production. This afternoon the Minister of Agriculture gave us some statistics. I took them down hurriedly and they may not be entirely accurate as I have them in my hand, but as I have them he said that in 1957 the total of poultry meat produced in the country was 279 million pounds. In 1958 the production was 346 million pounds.

I have some other statistics in my hand which were taken from the Quarterly Bulletin, Agricultural Statistics, June 1. I trust the hon. member for Essex East will be satisfied that I have made an accurate reference to the statement I have in my hand, following the admonition of the Minister of Agriculture this morning when the hon. gentleman from Essex East was wading through a mass of statistics. These statistics are as follows: cattle on farms in Canada as of June 1, 1951, numbered 8,353,000 head. The year 1958 was slightly down from 1957 because of the relatively good markets; in that year they numbered just over 11 million head. The statistics for hogs show that from 1951 to 1958 there was an increase in production from 4.9 million to 6.2 million, in round figures. The production of hogs has been extensive since 1951. The increase in production of numbers on farms was from 4.9 million in 1951 to 6.2 million in 1958. This demonstrates the great expansion that has taken place in the production of certain agricultural commodities. This would suggest to me that unless the government develops a new policy, or new aspects of its policy, we

may be faced with such a tremendous production that under the government's policy prices will fall so low as to threaten the very existence of the agricultural industry as we know it in this country. There is reason to be alarmed when one relates the tremendous increase in production to what I believe to be the government's trend in policy.

Sometimes we may be criticized for not advancing alternatives, but I believe it is absolutely essential to the orderly marketing of agricultural products in this country at reasonable prices for a central organization of some type to have control of the buying, assembling, grading, processing and selling of those commodities. By that I do not mean that a central organization should handle all of the business, but I believe we must have some central regulatory body. I would suggest that there should be established in this country immediately a national livestock marketing board. Perhaps one might extend it to a national agricultural products marketing board.

The grain producers on the prairies are criticized from time to time because it has been said they have produced too much, or because they have asked the government for too much, but for this they cannot be criticized. They have accepted control; they have supported control. As a matter of fact, a few years ago when a vote was taken in the province of Manitoba as to whether the farmers in that province wished oats and barley to come under the Canadian Wheat Board Act and the Canadian wheat board, they voted overwhelmingly in favour of this method of marketing their grain in the order of some 90 per cent. No matter who may criticize the Canadian wheat board, and there are many who do, whether they do it in the newspapers of this country, at times there is a concerted attack against orderly marketing when it comes to the agricultural producers by the great champions of monopolies in this country when it is a matter of control by big business of the means of production.

The wheat board controls in a very real sense the buying, assembling, storage and marketing of grain. This is the type of central control, democratic control, I suggest, that must be applied to other important segments of the agricultural industry. I should like to see the producers themselves take the initiative. I should like to see them do it with their own co-operative organizations set up on a national basis and I should like to see federal legislation with support prices in it which will enable provincial governments to pass similar legislation in order that this kind of necessary control may be obtained.