

possible effect of such price on seeding, and another as to what precautions had been taken to guard against a serious potato shortage next fall and winter. Prices of certified seed potatoes not being under a ceiling have risen to somewhat higher levels than usual as compared with ordinary table stock potatoes. These prices have not interfered with demand, however, which is very active. I am informed that the quantity of certified seed potatoes distributed in Canada this year is higher than ever before, the increase in Ontario and Quebec being in the neighbourhood of 25 to 30 per cent.

Exports of certified seed potatoes were placed under control by permit several weeks ago and supplies which would otherwise have moved for export are now being diverted into the domestic market.

Now as to the steps taken to stimulate production during the present year. First, I should point out that ceiling prices on table stock potatoes have been fixed at levels substantially higher than prevailed during the base period, even after taking into account normal carrying charges, which may provide some encouragement to production.

The Department of Agriculture has also been active in its production campaign. At the dominion-provincial meeting in December, definite plans were laid for increased potato acreage, and dominion and provincial departments of agriculture have been in constant communication on production plans in subsequent months. The goal for 1943 is 560,000 acres against approximately 506,000 in 1942. Each province has accepted a share of this dominion total and has been carrying on active promotional work. I might also mention in this connection the victory garden campaign.

Yesterday the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Hanson) referred to newspaper reports of a black market for maritime potatoes. I am informed that some preliminary investigations have been made by officials of the wartime prices and trade board in the maritimes, but so far no evidence has been received to substantiate the report that such a black market exists. The situation is being further investigated.

Mr. GRAYDON: May I ask—I do not know whether to call him “the deputy minister” —

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: “Assistant to the minister.”

Mr. GRAYDON: May I ask the Prime Minister how we are supposed to address parliamentary assistants?

[Mr. Abbott.]

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. GRAYDON: Then I ask the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance this question. Has his minister, or has the Minister of Agriculture, or his parliamentary assistant, had any reports or complaints that potatoes have been coming to dealers' hands or retailers' hands as the ordinary domestic product, not certified seed, which were then sold to the public at the higher, un-ceilinged prices of certified seed potatoes? I believe most hon. members have had complaints of this practice here and there.

Mr. ABBOTT: No, we have had no complaints that ordinary domestic stock potatoes have been sold as certified seed potatoes. That is a proceeding which would be contrary to the regulations, and a person involved would be subject to prosecution. There have been some complaints of certified seed potatoes having been sold for domestic use, and as I pointed out a moment ago, an order has been passed dealing with that.

Mr. COLDWELL: What steps will be taken this year to encourage farmers to store potatoes? Last year there was a bountiful crop on the prairies, and many thousands of tons this winter have been destroyed because they were not stored. I know of farmers who have caves of potatoes who are just feeding them to the stock, because there has been some deterioration during the winter; and when, in the autumn, the crop was bountiful they were not encouraged to take care of them. I know I drew the situation on the prairies to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture—last December, I think it was—and suggested that some steps should be taken to keep the potatoes for further use, but they have been destroyed.

Mr. ABBOTT: I am not in a position to answer that. As I pointed out at the beginning of my statement, the question of production is the primary responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture, but I will bring the hon. member's question to his attention and ask him to have it answered.

Mr. BLACKMORE: With reference to the question of seed potatoes, it would be unfair to ask the minister to give offhand the prices at which these potatoes are now sold throughout Canada. But would he give the house on Monday an idea of these prices? It has been drawn to my attention that prices for seed potatoes asked by the retail stores in Ottawa are exorbitant beyond all reason. I