

Supply—Agriculture

Even though there are other industries which at times provide more wealth to the country I can assure you that they are not as important to the welfare of Canada as the agricultural industry, for the simple reason that if we did not have an agricultural industry we would not have food for our table. That is the situation. The price of wheat is down this year because the government relaxed its efforts in the selling of our grain. Everywhere out west there are low quotas. Some farmers may be able to deliver four or five bushels of grain per cultivated acre, but that is all. The final payments have been delayed and this year they probably will be lower than usual.

Ever since this government came into power the farmers have not been receiving their interim payments, and this has had a severe effect on the economic welfare of the farming industry. Not once in the last five years when this government has been running things have the farmers had an interim payment of ten cents per bushel.

• (8:30 p.m.)

The price of cattle is down. The price of hogs is down. The premium on first grade hogs has been removed, except for \$1 per hundredweight, and the premium on first grade lambs has been removed. The premium on cheese has been removed. By the removal of these premiums on top quality produce the government has penalized those farmers who produced top quality. As a result it does not matter now whether or not the farmer raises first or second class products. They receive no premium for producing first grade.

Hon. members just heard my colleague, the hon. member for Wetaskiwin, speak about the appalling situation in dairy production. The government makes a new dairy policy every year, and none of them has been worth a hoot. Dairy farmers are becoming so unhappy about the situation they are leaving the industry. Approximately half of our large dairies are either out of existence, or on the way out. These farmers are selling their cows. Perhaps it will not be too many years before we will all be drinking synthetic milk and eating synthetic beefsteak. I do not know where we will find a substitute for the products made from wheat.

The egg situation in this country is particularly bad. The other day I received a letter, one of many about this situation. This constituent sent 75 dozen eggs to the city of Edmonton for which she received \$10.75. Of those

dozen, 43 dozen were grade A large for which she received 20 cents per dozen. She wondered why the price of eggs to the producer is so frightfully low. I made a few inquiries and found that during the first 11 months of last year we imported 11,059,558 dozen eggs from the United States at a cost of \$6,526,000. We imported 264,184 pounds of dried whole yolk and albumen at a cost of \$294,000. We also imported dry whole yolk and albumen n.e.s. to the extent of 1,821,560 pounds at a cost of \$187,000. These figures are taken from Dominion Bureau of Statistics reports. I have here a poultry marketing report issued on March 1, 1968 by the Canadian Department of Agriculture which indicates that to date this year Canada has imported from the United States 3,260 cases of eggs, each containing 30 dozen. No wonder the price of eggs to the primary producer is so low. We also imported 23,000 pounds of frozen eggs from the United States.

People also wonder why turkeys and chickens bring so little to the producer. This year Canada has already imported 1,359,386 pounds of poultry. Already this year the department has carried out inspections on a total of 489,464 poultry carcasses of various kinds. No wonder the primary producer of poultry receives so little for his produce. The farmers in central Canada, that is Ontario, Quebec and the maritimes are not faced with the difficulty of selling wheat, but they do have difficulties in the marketing of cattle, hogs, lambs, eggs, cheese and dairy products. They are suffering just as much as the western farmers.

Farmers are finding it very difficult to obtain loans under the Farm Improvement Loans Act because banks do not wish to lend money at the approved interest rate of 5 per cent. In light of the situation today farmers cannot afford to pay that interest rate, let alone a higher one. Farmers are also finding difficulty because of the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials. This is having a serious effect on the construction of granaries and other buildings. Machinery prices are increasing each year, and we are beginning to wonder what the government is going to do with the recommendations following the inquiry into farm machine prices. Probably this inquiry will end up just like other inquiries and royal commissions.

The high cost of farm machinery is very serious. A self-propelled combine capable of handling a large crop costs in the neighbourhood of \$15,000, or even more if it has a cab.