

Supply—Agriculture

support price they did not talk about averaging prices. They said every farmer would be guaranteed a minimum price.

Mr. Harkness: No.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The minimum price was fixed at \$2.10 by the hon. gentleman. I will say that he carried out his promise in one respect; that is, a floor price was designated, but it was never indicated that the assessment of the price the farmer would receive could mean that he would receive something less than the designated price. Then we were not told—

Mr. Harkness: That is entirely in your opinion.

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—that at the end of the season these prices would be averaged so that some farmers, instead of receiving \$2.10, would receive even as low as \$1.80, which did happen in some cases that I know about. When the minister deals with this question I hope he will indicate particularly what is the government's intention for the future. Are we going to follow the example of the United States and lower the floor price by 25 per cent, or anything comparable; because the lowering of the floor price in the United States is going to add to the competitive position that now prevails in Canada as a result of the very heavy importations into southwestern Ontario, particularly of United States agricultural products. Soybeans are only one example. Other examples include corn, canned tomatoes, fresh tomatoes and other products.

In the very comprehensive statement the minister made on March 6 he put on record the statistics having to do with total cash income in Canada from the sale of farm products by provinces, the figures for 1940 to 1957 being taken, I think he will agree, from the bureau of statistics, and those for 1958 from his own department. I think I am right in that.

Mr. Harkness: The figure I gave at that time was an estimate. The dominion bureau of statistics figures have come out since. I think the hon. member will find that they are almost exactly the same.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am glad to have that confirmed. The total for 1958, as given by the minister, was \$2,869,319,000. This figure includes some \$61 million of supplementary benefits paid to farmers in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. I think that is correct. But I suggest to the minister that the total farm cash income is a misleading yardstick to use, though undoubtedly it served the purpose of the minister in that he was able to show an increase of

\$276 million in 1958 over 1957. It seems to me the better course to follow would be to use farm net income, which would give a better indication, although as I say I did not know until this moment that the figures for 1958 were available.

A glance at the tables that are provided in the handbook of agricultural statistics for 1957, and those given by the minister on March 6, together with the number of farms according to the 1956 census as they appear in the Canada Year Book, gives one a very interesting picture of the state of agriculture generally in Canada which I think should be examined further at this time.

The hon. member for Timiskaming spoke of the condition of eastern agriculture, not in a way that prejudiced his view about the state of agriculture in other parts of Canada. He properly emphasized that in considering some of the developments in agriculture in Canada today one should take into consideration not sectional but national interests and present a national picture as well. It is in regard to this point that I want to say a few words, because I think an examination of the statistics taken from the various publications to which I have just referred will indicate that the average net income per farm in eastern Canada, that is to say in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, is substantially below the national average.

This suggests, without in any way failing to appreciate, as I indicated I do appreciate, the importance of agriculture in western Canada and the serious economic condition that confronts the farmers of western Canada, that we in this section of the country also have a great interest in this problem. I think hon. members generally will recognize that the problems of agriculture are not divisible, and that any depressed condition in one section of the country is of the greatest concern to all parts of the country. I know that hon. members from western Canada will understand and appreciate the situation in eastern Canada, just as over the years hon. members have appreciated the problems of western Canada. For instance, in 1957 the results in eastern Canada certainly were not very encouraging and, as I say, for the purpose of my notes I did not have the latest figures for 1958 which the Minister of Agriculture says are now available.

I think it is important that we recognize that what is significant is not the net return or the gross return, but the cost of goods and services used by the farmers which, of course, places a different interpretation on the picture. The attitude of the Minister of Agriculture, as expressed in the remarks he made in this house on March 6, seems to have