

*Supply—Agriculture*

We must ask ourselves how we can maintain and even increase the quality of our production in the face of possible future competition and, probably, of improved quality standards in the United States.

Hog improvement in Canada has taken place particularly over the last 40 years. After the first world war we began to lose to a considerable extent the traditional British market which had been built up by Canada over a number of years. We can go back and look at the figures since confederation and see that in the year 1900, for instance, we exported some 134 million pounds of bacon and ham to the United Kingdom—a very significant figure. And we can go from the period of the first world war when these exports were at a very high level most of the time—in two years they ran to over 200 million pounds—to the 1920's when the figure was declining largely due to increased competition from the Danish market and because of the efficiency and quality standards and closeness of control that Danish producers were putting into effect at that time. This, incidentally, is a position we still face, since the standards of the industry in Denmark, possibly by means or methods of control which we would not advocate in Canada, have inevitably resulted in a product which is uniform and which has a very high efficiency in arriving at market state. The average feed efficiency for Denmark has been quoted at a figure below three pounds of ration to a pound of gain, a figure which is most extraordinary. This has been brought about by constant selection and improvement of the Landrace breed of pig, which is most largely used in that country.

After the first world war we were dealing in Canada with hogs of a variety of types, some of which yielded good bacon or meat, but most of which were of the fat or lardy type, and these were not generally wanted by our export markets although there was, of course, a large domestic consumption. The hogs were bought and sold on a flat basis, regardless of quality, so the incentive to the farmer for supplying the consumer, either here or abroad, with a quality product did not exist. It was in these circumstances that in 1921 a conference of producers, packers, officials of the government and others interested was held in Ottawa, and in 1922 the grading of live hogs was initiated by the Department of Agriculture.

In 1927, the packers undertook to make all hog purchases on a grade basis, paying premiums for top quality hogs, a significant step along the road to uniformity and an incentive to producing a quality product in this country. In 1928, live hog grading was

made compulsory in Ontario, followed in the early thirties by other provinces, and so the movement grew across Canada. In 1934 provision was made for optional carcass grading and we were coming then, to a period of gradual transition from the grading of hogs on a live weight basis to optional grading on a carcass basis, and by 1940 most hogs were being graded on a carcass basis, though under optional conditions. In that year, however, carcass grading was designated as the only system of government grading in Canada, though not necessarily of market purchase.

Thus we have seen a transition which is of great interest to those engaged in the industry and it has had a very significant effect on hog quality as one can see if one examines the various figures which are available. For instance, statistics provided by the Department of Agriculture show that in 1929 the original top live grade, called select live hogs, and judged on the hoof, comprised about 16 per cent of the hogs marketed; and that by 1940, the year that carcass grading was made the only system of government grading, this figure had increased to almost 28 per cent, almost twice the proportion of hogs in that category during the earlier period.

If one looks at the reverse side—the so called butcher live or fat hogs—one would see that the number fell from a figure of 35 per cent in 1929 to a figure of approximately 8 per cent in 1940, so that under this live and optional carcass grading system there was a very definite increase in the quality of hogs produced in Canada. This has to a certain extent been the situation, too, under the mandatory carcass grading system although the figures do not always appear to indicate it.

This is one of the problems which producers and government officials must ponder, namely the fact that grade A carcass figures in 1940 comprised virtually 28 per cent of the hogs marketed in that year and that this has shifted during the late forties and early fifties to somewhat over 30 per cent, though it has now gone down again to just under 30 per cent. It is a fluctuating figure. However, one can add the fact that the live weight of hogs has increased rather markedly during this period. Thus, these figures may indicate a considerably greater rate of improvement than they may show on the surface.

It is interesting to note that Canada's share of the British market came back during that period as well; a tribute to this system, I think one might say. In Great Britain, during the early thirties our exports of bacon and ham, for instance, were down in the year