

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): May I supplement that by asking the minister to give a statement of the government's agricultural policy, generally speaking?

Hon. J. G. GARDINER (Minister of Agriculture): That is a fairly heavy order to receive at ten-thirty at night. The question asked by the hon. member for Souris as to how much we should produce and what we should be producing in connection with the war is difficult to answer. I think I have said in this house before, and I repeat now, that the agriculturist in surplus-producing countries always experiences difficulties before a war comes on, and even greater difficulties immediately after the beginning of a war. That has always been the history of agriculture in countries outside war zones producing commodities for consumption in other countries, particularly in those areas where the war is being carried on. That was true in the last war and up to date it has been true in this war.

I have no greater knowledge than anyone else in this chamber as to when the turning point will be reached in this war. In the last war it came in 1916, or a little more than two years after the war began. In this war, judging from what has happened so far, the period during which it will be difficult for agriculture in this country will probably be somewhat longer. In other words, we have passed through one fairly difficult year; we are well into the second difficult year, and there is not much possibility that we shall get out of our difficulties in connection with agriculture during the year through which we are now passing.

Having said that, I should like to call attention to the fact that we have something over five hundred million bushels of wheat in store in Canada, which means that, without taking into consideration any of the wheat we shall produce this year, we have at least two years' supply for ourselves, Great Britain and the other countries to which we have any chance of exporting wheat, unless something happens in the course of the war that has not happened as yet. Therefore there is no reason for saying to-night that we should increase the production of wheat in Canada. Possibly there is some reason for saying that we should reduce production rather than increase it during the coming summer, but I do not think anyone could base even advice to reduce wheat production on anything in the way of statistics or any experience we have had in this country in the past or that other countries have had in relation to the production of wheat. I would not be too insistent on saying that men should even cut down their acreage this year, although I think it would

be advisable for them to do so in view of storage conditions across this country. But I would not be at all sure that two or three years from now, someone could not rise in his place in this house and say that I had made a mistake in giving that advice, even with the world at war as it is to-day.

The other farm product that probably has been discussed at greatest length in Canada recently is pork products, particularly bacon. I think I have said before in this house, and, if not, I want to say it now, that in the fall of 1939, immediately after the war began, the British government took the trouble to send a man to Canada to discuss with us the matter of bacon. He was on his way to take up a position in Washington. The British government asked him to come by way of Canada and to take up his appointment in Washington after he had performed his mission here. That mission was to tell us in Canada not to increase our production of hogs because of any request we thought had been made or was likely to be made by Britain in relation to the war. He did not say we were not to increase our production of hogs; he said that was a matter for our own judgment, but he said they did not wish to be told later on that they had asked us to increase our hog production. That information was given the country at the time. I made the statement myself on many occasions, from one end of Canada to the other. That information was given to representatives of all the provincial governments, who were assembled in this city for the purpose of receiving it. They were told there was no intimation from Great Britain that they would require more in the way of pork products, and it was intimated to them that the British had clearly indicated to us that they did not want us to say later they had advised us to produce more pork products, but that we would have to form our own judgment in that regard.

During the early weeks of the war we found that our statistics with regard to the production of hogs in Canada were not authentic. We thought they were, but a very few weeks after the war began we found that there were more hogs in Canada than our statistics had led us to believe. That year we entered into an agreement with Great Britain for the delivery of 291,000,000 pounds of bacon, and all through the year we found that we were getting deliveries very much greater than the quantities required under that contract. The result was that during that year we actually delivered about 330,000,000 pounds as against the 291,000,000 pounds for which we had contracted.

[Mr. J. A. Ross.]