

Supply—Agriculture

branches of agriculture, and whatever contribution, if any, was made by the people as a whole would be for something for which there was a proven need.

Mr. Best: Mr. Chairman, I would like to talk briefly today on these agricultural estimates about the subject of hogs. This is, and has been, a traditional industry in Canada and of great importance, as all hon. members know. It is one which today, to my mind, is in a state of considerable flux, and there are many problems and many directions in which it is possible to travel, and we are seeking solutions. I might say that the figures for the industry as a whole have indicated in past years, in 1958 for example, that this is a very significant proportion of our total agricultural industry, and it has of course, particularly in past years, played an important part in our agricultural export market.

The matters which I want to bring up today specifically are those which have been brought to my attention by various associations and individuals across Canada. First, they involve the government premium system as it now exists and the possibility, and indeed the strong desire of many people, that a greater differentiation should be made between the A and B-1 grades of hogs. In addition, as a hog producer I realize that our record of performance or advanced registry stations are to a certain extent crowded in Canada. My own specific knowledge concerns mainly the one at Waterloo, Ontario, which has experienced very severe crowding, particularly in the last few years. Third, I would like to emphasize the point that our traditional British markets may be beckoning again, and I am sure the Minister of Agriculture and his department are examining this possibility with considerable interest. It may fall as well, partially at least, to the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Commerce, and possibly the Department of Finance with regard to currency problems, but it is a very enticing market at certain times, depending of course on price and quantity conditions in Canada.

Fourth, I am interested, as are all hon. members, in the government support policy with regard to hogs. I must say that the minister's comments and proposals this afternoon were helpful. As a matter of fact, on March 23 the minister said in this house that the support price of hogs would be lowered, and that there would be a different method of approach toward government assistance to hog farmers. I had some worries about these matters, not with regard to lowered floor, but with regard to quotas and deficiency payments, as possibly also did

other hon. members, and I feel the explanation which was given this afternoon has assisted us to a very considerable extent.

I would like to go back and talk briefly about the importance of this industry. One can examine various tables of figures and look, for instance, at the current review of agricultural conditions in Canada for January, 1959, and examine the hog population and markets as they existed in 1957 and 1958. One sees that the population of hogs on farms as of June 1, 1957 was 4,857,000, and one year later it was 6,164,000. This total increase percentage-wise for the whole of Canada was some 26.9 per cent, a very considerable figure and one which has brought us some problems which, though I do not think they are drastic, are unfortunate problems which we are facing today.

It might be said, Mr. Chairman, that one of the saving graces at this time and during 1958 was the domestic consumption of pork and pork products. This was, I believe, at a record high for that year. The estimated figure which I have for the moment for 1958 was 750 million pounds, and for 1957 the figure was 85 million pounds less, or 665 million pounds. So we did have high domestic consumption in 1958 of pork and pork products, which was perhaps, comparatively speaking, made possible by the high prices paid to farmers for beef, and the large export beef market. In addition we had a near record year, I think it might be said, for exports of bacon, ham and pork to the United States.

The figure for exports to the United States of Canadian bacon and ham in 1958 was 4.5 million pounds to a total value of very nearly \$4.5 million, and Canadian pork exports for 1958 were at a record high level to a value of over \$20 million, the largest proportion of which went to the United States. So that while we had a vast increase in hog population and production in Canada, the domestic consumption, combined with a large volume of exports, helped us very considerably.

The value of this industry is difficult to estimate and I have no exact figures on it, but one would gauge it each year at several hundreds of millions of dollars when we are talking in terms of an output figure of some six million pigs per year. Thus, we are dealing here with an industry of considerable importance. We all know—and this is familiar to those who have travelled in the United States—that Canada's reputation in the hog business is high. We have been famed for many years as a producer of quality hog products and it is this quality which I wish to emphasize today, because it is something which I feel to be of considerable importance.