

*Supply—Agriculture*

Were it not for the stabilization act and the prices we guaranteed under it for dairy products, the prices dairy farmers would have received during the past two years to three years for their dairy products would have been very much less than those they received. As I say, in that one calendar year 1958 the amount would have been about \$90 million to \$100 million less than they actually obtained.

(Translation):

**Mr. Belzile:** Mr. Chairman, before item No. 10 is adopted, I should like to say a few words about it.

Before dealing with the suggestions I propose to make to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Harkness), I should like to point out to the house that I deeply regret the harsh words which the hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska (Mr. Boulanger) said, a moment ago, about the Minister of Agriculture, i.e. that the policy of the Department of Agriculture tended to prevent the accumulation of surpluses rather than help farmers.

For my part, I feel that the Minister of Agriculture is doing all he can to help the agricultural class in all respects and particularly in regard to farm prices stabilization.

I am not afraid to say that, if I had been Minister of Agriculture, having to dispose of a surplus of 78 million pounds of butter, I would have hesitated a few days before deciding to maintain the support price on butter at 64 cents a pound for the current year until May 30, 1961.

I believe that because of this decision, the federal Minister of Agriculture certainly did not deserve to be accused of working for the reduction of agricultural production, rather than for the agriculture class generally.

Personally, I am happy to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for the wise decision he took about the price of butter. I participated actively in this request because I was among those who asked the Minister of Agriculture for special consideration on this matter. I was glad to see that he responded favourably to our pressure. On behalf of all the agricultural class of my province and of the country, I wholeheartedly thank him for that.

And now, Mr. Chairman, there is another product which comes under the ambit of the agricultural stabilization act. I refer to wool.

It is estimated that last year's production is slightly over that of 1958, which was 5,755,556 pounds.

If this happens, the Canadian wool production will have increased for the second consecutive year. In 1957, a total of 4,112,000 pounds were sold.

[Mr. Harkness.]

The improvement in the wool market in 1959 resulted in a general price increase, and in an immediate drop of 7 cents a pound in the deficiency payment.

According to the daily DBS bulletin dated March 6, 1960, wool production in Canada went up from 7,624,000 pounds in 1958 to 8,287,000 in 1959, or an increase of 8.7 per cent. Between those two years, the shorn wool production went up from 6,345,000 to 6,800,000 pounds and the pulled wool production from 1,279,000 to 1,487,000 pounds.

From 1958 to 1959, Canadian wool exports increased from 4,002,000 to 5,002,000 pounds (greasy wool basis) and imports rose from 42,209,000 to 51,492,000 pounds.

If stocks had remained the same, Canadian consumption in 1959 would amount to 54,777,000 pounds, that is, an increase of one fifth over the 45,831,000 pounds of the previous year.

In the light of all the figures I have just quoted, it would seem that the value of the product has helped improve our domestic market and our markets abroad, in such a way that the margin of deficiency prices has gone down 7 cents a pound, as compared to last year.

I think this figure is an indication that it would be a good thing to broaden the scale wool production and, consequently, of sheep breeding.

In the province of Quebec—and I am convinced it is the same in several areas of Ontario and of the maritimes—certain farmers find sheep breeding a paying proposition.

Rocky farms which produce very little and are very costly, are ideal for sheep breeding.

Sheep breeding is not very costly. In fact, the cost of buildings is low; the required manpower is not large; the operation involves very little expense. Therefore, in my opinion, it would be a good thing to encourage sheep breeding.

Now would be the time—and it would be good for agricultural economy in general—for the federal government, in co-operation with provincial governments, to launch an intensive propaganda program for the information of our farmers, at least for those who would be interested in sheep breeding and for those whose farms would be suitable to that type of breeding. It would be a good thing, as I say, to organize such an educational program to promote sheep breeding.

I am convinced that the federal and provincial departments of agriculture could devise an educational program which would