

*Egg and Hog Grading*

hon. member of this house, no matter where he sits, can afford to make a statement like that without submitting at least some evidence as a basis for his statement.

Mr. MOTHERWELL: Hear, hear.

Mr. WEIR (Melfort): I am not speaking of hog graders simply as Minister of Agriculture for the dominion but as a farmer myself in Saskatchewan, and I want to say that I have never found anyone more anxious to help the farmer in improving the quality of his hogs, in getting better production stock, in the feeding of the stock, and so directing the farmer that with an intelligent operation of his hog industry he can obtain a higher percentage of selects or bacon hogs, and in that way get a greater return from them, than the hog graders in this country. The hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Mullins) has stated that these men would be better engaged if they assisted in the improving of the hog industry. The fact is that that is what they are doing. They are not being paid only for grading hogs, they act as field men. They give a good deal of their time to the working out of our hog policies. I do not intend to take any time in discussing this phase.

As a farmer, I cannot speak too strongly in favour of the work these men are doing. The cost is less than one one-hundredth of a cent per pound; it is in the neighbourhood of two cents per hog. At the present time we do not believe that the grading regulations or the carrying out of those regulations are all that they should be. A continual study is being made of these matters but the fact is that a system of hog grading was asked for by the producers, not by the packers or by the government. It was only after it was felt that there was a very strong demand for such a system that steps were taken to work one out. At the risk of being misunderstood, I think it can be said that the present system of grading is not of such a character that it can be told from a live hog whether that hog will make a Wiltshire side. All that can be done is to arrive at some idea of the conformation of the hog and whether it will be finished properly when processed. We have always felt that there is a good deal of dissatisfaction with the system, but it has been carried on more as promotion work than with the idea of stating whether or not a hog will make a proper side. We cannot tell simply by looking at a hog just what the finish will be or the amount of lean and fat there will be in the side after killing. The only way this can be done is by grading on the rail.

[Mr. R. Weir.]

Hon. members opposite have advocated that a change should be made to grading on the rail. Conferences have been held, both during the tenure of the previous government and our own, between producers, packers and the departmental officials. An attempt has been made to find out how these difficulties can be overcome. One of the greatest difficulties in grading on the rail is identification. Hogs are shipped in carload lots from Edmonton in Alberta, say, to Moncton in New Brunswick. If these were graded on the rail the farmer would have to wait until they were slaughtered and graded before receiving his settlement. The great difficulty has been to work out a proper means of identification. This is more difficult in Canada than it is in Denmark where they have mostly co-operative plants drawing hogs from small areas. Different methods of tattooing have been tried out but they were not found to be altogether successful. Different tags have been tried as well, as this is the method of identification used in Denmark and Sweden. It is now believed that if some changes were made in the machinery of the packing plants a method of identification could be worked out. The present machines take off many of the tags along with the hair and we feel that with some slight changes being made we can work out a proper method of identification. Within the last three years hundreds of thousands of hogs have been tested on the rail as an experiment. We feel that this is the only absolute test of the value of a hog. Under the proposed regulations it is possible for a farmer to enter into a written agreement with certain packing plants to have his hogs tested on the rail by government officials. It is difficult to say what has been the value in dollars and cents in the past of these grading regulations, but I believe it has been considerable. I was in Winnipeg in January and met live stock commission men from Winnipeg, Montreal, Toronto and various other places in Canada. I have heard some drovers and some hon. members, both inside and out of the house, raise objections to hog grading. It has been stated that money was being taken away from the farmers. I put this question to these live stock commission men from all over Canada: Do you think you get more money for the hogs sold in any one year when they are graded than you do when they are not graded? The answers I received were two nays and five yeas. One of the nays came from a commission firm in Montreal.

In this connection I might state that Montreal is one of the places where grading has not met with favour and over a number of