

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Does that give figures with regard to the sheep population of Canada, and is there anything in connection with the development of wool and mutton sheep suitable to western Canada?

Mr. GARDINER: I doubt very much whether there are detailed figures with regard to production, but I have some figures for production of farm products. That would come better under the item of production services, which comes next.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: I think we should encourage the development of the sheep industry in western Canada. Some of the finest wool produced in Australia is produced in the cooler areas. There is diversification of agriculture there, and an opportunity for diversification would be beneficial to our western farmers.

Another matter which has been quite evident in recent months is the growing of potatoes. Western Canada grew a very large crop last year, and some farmers were offering people potatoes if they would come and dig them up. They have not been able to take advantage of the markets on account of the quality of the potatoes. They have a scab on them, and proper attention has not been given to growing the right kind. Is anything being done in the way of a programme of education to induce the people in that area to go into the commercial growing of potatoes and shipping them? There is a problem out there, but if proper steps were taken to develop this line it would make western Canada one of the most productive fields. What has been done by the experimental farms in that direction?

Mr. GARDINER: As regards sheep, we have been carrying on work similar to that done in Australia. We have taken some of their breeds, crossed them with some of our own and produced a Canadian type of sheep which we are now attempting to encourage people to make use of in building up flocks in this country. That work has been going on for some time. It is purely a western activity.

So far as potatoes are concerned, I have hesitated to raise the question here, but it seems that I cannot avoid it when a question is put to me direct. I understand that about 100 carloads of potatoes were shipped from Saskatchewan to the east during this period of comparative shortage, but I have been somewhat concerned ever since the war started about directing people to do things during war time, which they can do to advantage but which would probably put completely out

of business someone else who is just as much concerned about making a living as people in other sections of the country. It is well known that the Idaho potato is regarded as one of the best varieties produced on the American continent. Idaho runs up to our boundary line, and we have vast areas in the west on which I am satisfied we could produce potatoes. There are 500,000 odd acres of potatoes grown in Canada. We have 300,000 farmers in the west, and if we got each one to grow an acre of potatoes for sale it would play havoc with the potato market in Canada if we had to market the product here. I do not know that our people in the west are particularly anxious to get into the growing of potatoes. If we guaranteed a price we could get them to grow so many potatoes next year that we could supply the continent, provided the price were high enough. Whether that is a good thing to do in the midst of a war, and when people do want to buy greater quantities of everything than before, is something about which I have some doubts. If we grow more potatoes in the west I hope it will be because we have a suitable market for them. We would go into potatoes and find in a year or two's time that not only were we not able to make anything ourselves, but we might have put everybody else out who could not grow anything other than potatoes to advantage.

I do not know how many hon. members of the committee have been in the section of New Brunswick where they grow potatoes. I was there last year and on one previous occasion. While we in western Canada talk about wheat, in so far as that more limited area is concerned they grow potatoes just as we grow wheat. I was astonished upon my first trip at the size of the area taken up with the growing of potatoes. While it is not large as compared with the level plains of western Canada, in that whole area the people depend absolutely on potatoes for their existence. I would hesitate even in war time to start inducing people in other sections where they can make a reasonable living to go into potatoes on a basis which, if not before the war is over, certainly when the war is over, would not help themselves and would injure other people. We have been trying to keep these things as nearly as possible on a sound basis.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: I believe that the dehydrating plants in the east have used up practically all their supplies and that at the present time there is a shortage. If the minister reads the report of the food conference which was recently held in the United