

Supply—Agriculture

In 1960-61, the price of wheat in France was set at \$2.07 a bushel for soft wheat and \$2.61 for durum wheat. As for rye, the price was \$1.34; barley was \$1.35, while the Canadian price of barley Canada-West No. 2, was only \$0.77 a bushel, in 1959.

The price of oats was set at \$0.68 a bushel.

In New Zealand, the price of wheat was \$1.85 a bushel in the southern parts of the country and \$1.99 in the north.

In Australia, the price of wheat for the current year was set at \$1.66 a bushel, or \$0.37 more than last year. In Denmark, the price of wheat was set at \$1.86 a bushel, or \$0.38 more than last year.

If we compare those prices to those we obtained in our own country last year, we notice a marked difference.

Last year, according to the report of the Canadian wheat board, wheat sold for \$1.596.

That is an indication of the interest shown by the government in the field of agricultural price stabilization, particularly as regards wheat.

I must say that the Minister of Agriculture and the government he is associated with were more interested in talking about agricultural price stabilization three years ago than they are now.

I would ask the minister, and I base my question on the representations made to me by the western grain producers, whether he intends to announce a price setting policy for grain.

I have more remarks to make about agricultural price stabilization, but I would rather wait for the minister's reply before starting on other farm products. I would like information as to the government's policy on the price of western grain.

(Text):

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): To give a short answer to the question, the prairie wheat farmer knows that his products are sold on the export markets of the world. Until recently, no support or extra subsidy was given to the Canadian wheat farmers; they paid the complete cost of the operations of getting their product to market, and so on.

The hon. member mentioned the high prices in other countries of the world. I could give a list of every country in the world that is a producer of wheat to show that their support prices are very high. In this particular case, we are an exporting country and are trying to get into their markets. Our prices are set on two general bases: first, on the international wheat agreement; and, second, on world prices, which are set by competition according to the laws of supply and demand.

Therefore, outside of the existing subsidies for the handling of grain through the payment of the excess storage charges, there is no intention on the part of the government to go into the rat race of trying to compete with those other importing countries and subsidize all export grain grown in Canada.

Mr. Nasserden: With respect to the administration of the Agricultural Stabilization Act, I should like to touch on one or two things that have been bothering some of the people in my riding. One of these is the application of this act to eggs. When I was in my riding at Christmas eggs were selling at about 18 cents to 20 cents a dozen; at the present time they are selling at from 20 cents to 22 cents a dozen. There does not look as if there will be any possibility of deficiency payments being made to individual producers on the national average price as set out by the legislation. I do not think anyone has suggested that 18 cents to 22 cents is a high price for eggs. The producers in the province of Saskatchewan certainly have not been able to share in the benefits of this program to the extent that producers in other parts of the country have been able to do so.

The situation with regard to hogs, of course, is still in a state of flux and there is also that same measure of uncertainty in that industry as there is in the egg industry in all parts of Canada. The other day hogs went down \$4 a hundred on the prairies. This was another indication of the uncertainty, and the fluctuation in price certainly is not to the advantage of the producers in that area.

It has been suggested in some quarters that farmers should receive support prices on those products at whatever quota the government wants to set, and that some policy be entered into along the lines of the permit books that we have for the sale of grain in western Canada. There may be one or two objections to such a program but it would give the individual producer solid support for a minimum of production and would certainly have a greater stabilizing effect than does the present policy. The stabilization program in general has been such that Canadian farmers have received greater benefits than they did under the old price support act. However, with regard to eggs and hogs I think there is some danger and producers in Saskatchewan certainly would like to see the policy revised to some extent. Can the minister give us any indication whether there is a possibility of some revision in that regard?

(Translation):

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Chairman, before the minister answers the question just put to him, I should like to make a few comments