

Supply—Agriculture

The Canada agricultural prices support board, which was later changed to the name of the agricultural prices stabilization board, continued to apply a floor price of 58 cents per pound to first grade butter in solids delivered to Moncton and Saint John cold storages. To some extent this price regulated the butter prices throughout the year. However, the threatened shortage of butter had the effect of prices increasing considerably above the floor early in the month of August, and continued to improve, and accelerated still more, when the selling price of solids to the trade during the fall and winter months was set at 63 cents per pound in solids delivered to the distributor. Very little butter was sold to the stabilization board during the year, but about 70 earloads were required to supplement winter production...

At the time of writing, the agricultural prices stabilization board has announced that the floor price on creamery butter in solids for the year 1958 will be 64 cents per pound delivered to cold storages, which is six cents per pound higher than for the year 1957.

What is the general inference then, Mr. Chairman, to be drawn from that report? It clearly indicates that while prices for dairy products for the last fiscal year were generally higher in New Brunswick, yet that was not sufficient incentive to increase production to any extent. It would indicate also that an increasing number of our rural population, year after year, are abandoning farms. Some might be tempted to say that in the light of these circumstances this is a desirable situation. I submit, Mr. Chairman, that any situation favouring any disproportionate dislocation of our rural population toward the industrialized centres of the country is not economically sound. Such a situation entails the disintegration of our rural community which should remain a vital part of the whole economic structure of the country.

Here is one strange aspect of the true economic picture in the maritimes. While we have the largest relative number of unemployed on the one hand, on the other hand we have a deficient agricultural production in almost every field, with an ever-increasing acreage of fertile land lying idle. A comprehensive study of local market conditions was published in 1957 by the Canadian Department of Agriculture, which is entitled "Atlantic Provinces Agriculture". I should like to give some of the findings and recommendations which resulted from that study. In 1950 there were 10,000 farms in Prince Edward Island; 23,000 farms in Nova Scotia; 26,000 farms in New Brunswick. Fifty-two per cent of the farms in Prince Edward Island had produced in 1950 which sold for over \$1,200, while in Nova Scotia just over 28 per cent of all farms were in this category, and only 29 per cent in New Brunswick. Almost 90 per cent of the farms in Newfoundland produced less than \$1,200 in produce in 1950.

Maritime agriculture produces insufficient crops and livestock for the needs of the people of the region, and for the Atlantic provinces in general. During 1955 only potatoes, some animal products such as hides, wool and by-products, apples and live cattle were a net export. During 1955 a net of 85,000 tons of canned goods were also imported. Of the major crops and products grown in the maritimes, potatoes, apples and blueberries were considered surplus; wool, strawberries, eggs and ice cream were almost in equilibrium with the total consumption. Milk and butter were in a deficit position, while poultry meat, cheese, honey, concentrated milk and red meats were markedly deficit. Two of the three maritime provinces are deficit areas with respect to red meat production in relation to consumption. Prince Edward Island produces double its needs; New Brunswick is 47 per cent self-sufficient and Nova Scotia only 37 per cent.

The dairy industry has been the backbone of agriculture in the maritimes. The production of a major portion of the beef has been as a by-product of dairying. This has resulted in the lower than average quality of beef. The aim of dairy farms should be toward marked expansion of milk cows, and for all livestock farming in general it would seem desirable to institute more research designed to determine the best rotation crop methods for beef and for dairy production on each of the major soil types in the Atlantic provinces. Hogs and poultry have been very useful as major sources of supplementary income, and in expanding total output on a limited land basis they should be expanded only to the point where the Atlantic provinces' needs are satisfied.

There is the situation, Mr. Chairman, concerning the general economic picture of the maritimes and the relative position of agriculture in that picture. That situation is a challenge, a challenge to the responsibility of both federal and provincial authorities, and a challenge to the initiative of the people themselves. We speak with great emphasis at this time of the urgency of developing industry in our part of the country. With that I fully agree. While proceeding in this direction, however, we should make sure that our efforts show balance and co-ordination. A more highly developed agricultural production in accordance with the domestic needs of our local population should be of the essence of a vigorous program toward the goal I have mentioned.

I urge the federal government, through the extended facilities of the Department of Agriculture, to take the lead in giving to the maritime provinces a prosperous and self-sufficient agriculture to meet the needs of the