

With Our Weekly Newspaper Representatives Overseas

By Messrs. E. P. MacLennan and C. J. Milburn, Official Delegates of the C.A.W.N. to the Canadian Press Party at London

BRITAIN'S BEST FOOD PRODUCTION

(By C. J. Milburn, M.P.)

The story of Britain's food production is one of the outstanding stories of the present war. Few realize that when this war started Britain was only 100 per cent self-sufficient in food. Today that figure has been improved 120 per cent and behind it lies a story of organization and effort that is an credit to the farmers of the British Isles. Not only did Britain (and its Empire) produce more than 100 per cent of her food requirements, but she also imported over 3,000,000 tons of national foodstuffs. This is a situation which has never before appeared during the past four years.

A Farmer's Tale

The task of supplying the British food production was placed by the Minister (Churchill) in the hands of a farmer, a man who had made a success of his own farm. Mr. H. S. Hilderson, M.P., has done this task with the full cooperation of the government and public spirited citizens throughout the farming communities who volunteered their services. The result is that the output of food in this country is 120 per cent and raised in the country the national foodstuffs (mostly) imported. It is well known that the increase in food production during the last war was only 50 per cent.

British Farming Statistics

The productivity of British farming is the highest in the world. For instance, the average yield of wheat in Britain is 17.8 bushels per acre, compared with 12 bushels in the United States. The difference lies in intensive cultivation against extensive cultivation.

Scientific Research

Throughout the war the government has brought to the farmer the fruits of scientific research. In 1941 a National Farm Survey covered every farm in the country of 10 acres and over, and the field work was practically completed by the end of 1942. The survey fell under three categories:

(a) A "farm record" for each farm which gives information under three headings: (1) the natural state of the farm, including its fertility; the adequacy of water and electricity supplies; the management condition of the farm; and its war-time planning up report. (2) The information on the management condition of the farm is summarized in the grading of the farmer, A, B, or C.

(b) The complete 1941-42 season's return for the farm, including all the usual statistics of crop yields and livestock numbers, together with supplementary information asked specially for farm survey purposes, on rent and length of occupation of the farm.

(c) A plan of the farm showing its boundaries and the fields contained in it, on the 10 in. or 12 1/2 in. scale. This information provides a complete picture of the farm and will also be invaluable for post-war planning.

During the last war, 38 per cent of the arable land of Britain was under crops. Last year the percentage had increased to 47 per cent. It is expected that in 1944 the average number of acres will be something like 12,000,000 acres and Britain expects to maintain this increased acreage at least until 1947 in order that surplus products from the occupying countries will be free to move to the occupied countries of Europe where the needs will be great.

Machinery Increase Production

In discussing the increase in production with the Canadian Minister of Agriculture, Hon. R. S. Hilderson pointed out that machinery had played a large part. For instance, the increase in tractors imported from Canada and the United States jumped from 35,000 to 150,000. This in large measure permitted the carrying out of Britain's increased food production without an increase in manpower. Since July, 1940, 100,000 men have been permitted to leave agriculture. Today, 80,000 women from Britain's Land Army and the U.S. Army are mightily proud of the work they have been doing. "The uniform we have provided for this army is the smartest in the service," the said, "and has done much to attract to this service. Some 20,000 prisoners are also used."

Wheat Production and Cost

Talking on the production and cost of wheat grown in this country, the Minister said that the production per acre was the highest in the world and

the cost per bushel about 700 cents. He pointed out that Canadian wheat had a lower cost than British wheat. In 1943, the average yield of wheat in Canada was 12.5 bushels per acre, compared with 17.8 bushels per acre in Britain. The cost of production in Canada was 700 cents per bushel, while in Britain it was 1,000 cents per bushel.

After the war the Minister felt there would be a large increase in the number of tractors in this country and that the production would be much higher than it is today.

Speaking about the increased efficiency in farming, Mr. Hilderson said that the amount of fertilizer used in 1943 was 2 per cent more than in 1942, and that the amount of insecticide used was 10 per cent more.

Financial aid had also been granted to the farmer. Mr. Hilderson said that the amount of government grants to farmers in 1943 was 3,000 million pounds, compared with 2,000 million pounds in 1942. This was a 50 per cent increase.

The Minister also pointed out that the amount of government expenditure on agricultural research had increased from 10 million pounds in 1942 to 20 million pounds in 1943.

The Minister also mentioned that the amount of government expenditure on agricultural extension had increased from 10 million pounds in 1942 to 20 million pounds in 1943.

Dealing with the labor situation, the Minister stated that in December, 1942, there were 370,000 farmers and their wives on the land as well as 700,000 men and women workers. Today there are also 800,000 in the Women's Land Army, besides 300,000 other women working on the land. Only those in the Land Army who are volunteers are entitled to wear the uniform. It is interesting to note also that in 1942, 200,000 officers and men of the forces were offered to assist when labor was short and some 200,000 women and children went out on bicycles to help on the land.

In the harvest of 1940, 80,000 school boys and girls went in to help and helped to bring in the harvest. In 1941 over 12,000 school boys were employed and the number in 1942 was about 31,000 boys and girls. In 1943 it exceeded 50,000.

Wages in agriculture have increased greatly during the war and today women are paid 48 shillings or about \$1,000 per week and their keep in the summer (they work 52 hours a week) in the winter 48 hours per week. Only volunteers are accepted in the Women's Land Army and five out of six applicants are turned down. The minimum wage for men is 65 shillings but there have been cases where men have received 115 pounds per week during special seasons and as high as 17 pounds. There is no ceiling on salaries paid in the agricultural and competition for labor has been particularly keen.

Mechanization of Harvesting

Farming has already become mechanized in Britain. We have already pointed out that the use of tractors jumped from 25,000 in 1939 to 150,000 last year and accounts for the reason why tractors are so difficult to purchase in Canada and the United States. The supply of tractors in both countries was rushed to Britain and has played a large part in improving the food situation in this country. The number of principal cultivating instruments in use in 1942 was about 11 times more than the pre-war number and by the end of 1943 this had risen to about 21 times pre-war level.

The amount of harvesting machinery has not risen to the same extent but the greater use of existing machinery, longer hours per day and longer period of operation, together with the introduction and development of the use of improved types such as the combined harvester-thresher, have enabled the much larger wartime harvests to be dealt with effectively. By the end of 1943 the increase in harvesting machinery over pre-war levels had reached two-thirds. Through the County Agricultural Executive Committees the greatest possible amount of work was done by each machine through the formation by farmers of district pools of their own machinery from which all could draw help in time of need.

Commonwealth and World

Editorial from The Times, London, Thursday, May 12, 1944

The address which the Prime Minister delivered yesterday before the House of Commons was the far-ranging estimate of an administration thinking of the British Commonwealth and the world in world-wide terms.

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The Road Ahead...

Construction equipment, giving us the most advanced methods of production, is the key to the future. The road ahead is paved with progress.