

Halton M.P. Suggests Hog Marketing Changes

A number of changes in the present government policies were suggested for pig marketing and production in Canada by Sandy Best, Halton M.P. in a speech in the House of Commons on April 10th.

Mr. Best's speech is reproduced below in its entirety.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to talk briefly today on these agricultural estimates about the subject of hogs. This is, and has been, a traditional industry in Canada and of great importance, as all hon. members know. It is one which today, to my mind, is in a state of considerable flux, and there are many problems and many directions in which it is possible to travel, and we are seeking solutions. I might say that the figures for the industry as a whole have indicated in the past years,

in 1958 for example, that this is a very significant proportion of our total agricultural industry, and it has of course, particularly in past years, played an important part in our agricultural export market.

The matters which I want to bring up today specifically are those which have been brought to my attention by various associations and individuals across Canada. First, they involve the government premium system as it now exists and the possibility, and indeed the strong desire of many people, that a greater differentiation should be made between the A and B-1 grades of hogs. In addition, as a hog producer I realize that our record of performance or advanced registry stations are to a certain extent crowded in Canada. My own specific knowledge concerns mainly one at Waterloo, On-

tario, which has experienced very severe crowding, particularly in the last few years. Thirdly I would like to emphasize the point that our traditional British markets may be backing again, and I am sure the Minister of Agriculture and his department are examining this possibility with considerable interest. It may fall as well, partially at least, to the responsibility of the Dept. of Trade and Commerce, and possibly the Dept. of Finance with regard to currency problems, but it is a very exciting market at certain times, depending of course on price and quantity conditions in Canada.

Fourthly, I am interested, as are all hon. members, in the government support policy with regard to hogs. I must say that the minister's comments and proposals this afternoon were helpful. As a matter of fact, on March 23 the minister said in this house that the support price of hogs would be lowered, and that there would be a different method of approach toward government assistance to hog farmers. I had some worries about these matters, not with regard to lowered floor, but with regard to quotas and deficiency payments, as possibly also did other hon. members, and I feel the explanation which was given this afternoon has assisted us to a very considerable extent.

I would like to go back and talk briefly about the importance of the industry. One can examine various tables of figures and look, for instance, at the current review of agricultural conditions in Canada for January, 1959, and examine the hog population and markets as they existed in 1957 and '58. One sees that the population of hogs on farms as of June 1st, 1957, was 4,857,000 and one year later it was 6,164,000. This total increase percentage wise for the whole of Canada was some 26.9 per cent, a very considerable figure and one which, though I do not think they are drastic, are unfortunate problems which we are facing today.

It might be said Mr. Chairman, that one of the saving graces at this time and during 1958 was the domestic consumption of pork and pork products. This was, I believe, at a record high for the year. The estimated figure which I have for the moment for 1958 was 750 million pounds, and for 1957 the figure was 85 million pounds less, or 665 million pounds. So we did have high domestic consumption in 1958 of pork and pork products which was perhaps, comparatively speaking, made possible by the high prices paid to farmers for beef, and the large export beef market. In addition we had a near record year, I think it might be said, for exports of bacon, ham, and pork to the United States.

The figure for exports to the United States, of Canadian bacon and ham in 1958 was 4.5 million pounds, to a total value of 4.5 million, and Canadian pork exports for 1958 were at a record high level to a value of over \$20 million, the largest proportion of which went to the United States. So that while we had a vast increase in hog population and production in Canada, the domestic consumption, combined with a large volume of exports, helped us very considerably.

The value of this industry is difficult to estimate, and I have no exact figures on it, but one would gauge it each year at several hundred millions of dollars when we are talking in terms of an output figure of some six million pigs per year. Thus, we are dealing here with an industry of considerable importance. We all know, and this is familiar to those who have travelled in the United States, that Canada's reputation in the hog business is high. We have been famed for many years as a producer of quality hog products and it is this quality which I wish to emphasize today, because it is something which I feel to be of considerable importance. We must ask ourselves how we can maintain and even increase the quality of our production in the face of possible future competition and probably, of improved quality standards in the United States.

Hog improvement in Canada has taken place particularly over the last 40 years. After the first world war we began to lose to a considerable extent the traditional British market which had been built up by Canada over a number of years.

We can go back and look at the figures since confederation and see that in the year 1900, for instance, we exported some 134 million pounds of bacon and ham to the United Kingdom—a very significant figure. And we can go from the period of the first world war when these exports were at a very high level most of the time—in two years they ran to over 200 million pounds—to the 1920's when the figure was declining largely due to increased competition from the Danish market and because of the efficiency and quality standards and closeness of control that Danish producers were putting into effect at that time. This, incidentally, is a position we still face, since the standards of the industry in Denmark, possible by means or methods of control which we would not advocate in Canada, have inevitably resulted in a product which is uniform and which has a very high efficiency in arriving at market state. The average feed efficiency for Denmark has been quoted at a figure below three pounds of ration to a pound of gain—a figure which is most extraordinary. This has been brought about by constant selection and improvement of the Landrace breed of pig, which is most largely used in that country.

After the first world war we were dealing in Canada with hogs of a variety of types, some of which yielded good bacon or meat, but most of which were of the fat or lardy type, and these were not generally wanted by our export markets although there was, of course, a large domestic consumption. The hogs were bought and sold on a flat basis, regardless of quality, so the incentive to the farmer for supplying the consumer, either here or abroad, with a quality product did not exist. It was in these circumstances that in 1921 a conference of producers, packers, officials of the government and others interested was held in Ottawa, and in 1922 the grading of live hogs was initiated by the Department of Agriculture.

In 1927, the packers undertook to make all hog purchases on a grade basis, paying premiums for top quality hogs, a significant step along the road to uniformity and an incentive to producing a quality product in this country. In 1928, live hog grading was made compulsory in Ontario, followed in the early thirties by other provinces, and so the movement grew across Canada. In 1934 provision was made for optional carcass grading and we were coming then, to a period of gradual transition from the grading of hogs on a live weight basis to optional grading on a carcass basis, though under optional conditions. In that year, however, carcass grading was designated as the only system of government grading in Canada, though not necessarily of market purchase.

Thus we have seen a transition which is of great interest to those engaged in the industry and it has had a very significant effect on hog quality as one can see if one examines the various figures which are available. For instance, statistics provided by the Department of Agriculture show that in 1929 the original top live grade, called select live hogs, and judged on the hoof, comprised about 16 per cent of the hogs marketed; and that by 1940, the year that carcass grading was made the only system of government grading, this figure had increased to almost 28 per cent, almost twice the proportion of hogs in that category during the earlier period.

If one looks at the reverse side—the so called butcher live or fat hogs—one would see that the number fell from a figure of 25 per cent in 1929 to a figure of approximately 8 per cent in 1940, so that under this live and optional carcass grading system there was a very definite increase in the quality of hogs produced in Canada. This has to a certain extent been the situation, too, under the mandatory carcass grading system although the figures do not always appear to indicate it.

This is one of the problems which producers and government officials must ponder, namely the fact that grade A carcass figures in 1940 comprised virtually 28 per cent of the hogs marketed in that year and that this has shifted during the late forties and early fifties to somewhat over 30 per cent, though it has now gone down again to just under 30 per cent. It is a fluctuating figure. However, one can add the fact that the live weight of hogs has increased rather markedly during this period. Thus, these figures may indicate a considerably greater rate of improvement than they may show on the surface.

It is interesting to note that Canada's share of the British market came back during that period as well; a tribute to this system, I think one might say. In Great Britain, during the early thirties our exports of bacon and ham, for instance, were down in the year 1929 to 25 million pounds; remaining at this level for the next two or three years, hovering around 10 to 30 million pounds, but during the latter years of the thirties the level had gone up to well over 100 million pounds.

Admire, But Don't Pick Wildflowers Lovers Urge Public

In their natural woodland setting, the trilliums are one of the most attractive of spring wildflowers. The trilliums at Terra Cotta Conservation area were particularly beautiful last Sunday, dappling the forest floor with gay white patterns.

The young city man noticed the trilliums, too. But he wasn't content to admire them in their native environment. He had the notion that a large bouquet of trilliums would look smart in a vase on the living room table back home. He and his son began picking them. By the time at Terra Cotta conservation staffer caught up with them they had plucked almost every trillium in sight.

Of course the harm had been done. The Conservation man patiently explained that wildflowers, with few exceptions, do not take kindly to being picked. The trilliums wilted within half an hour and wound up in an ash can.

"We like to make people feel at home in the conservation areas," declares field officer Ted Sutter, "but we're hoping that the public becomes sufficiently conservation-minded that it won't be necessary, eventually, to have to remind them about such things as picking wildflowers and carving trees."

Live and let live, that others may also enjoy the beauties of nature, might well be the subject of a conservation appeal. By picking trilliums or other wildflowers, one only succeeds in killing the flowers and in depriving others of a woodland vista.

The Credit Valley Conservation Authority is a non-profit-making organization of public service minded men. They are dedicated to a number of projects all of which come under the heading of conservation. A word which means many different things to many different people. It means flood control, reforestation, restoration of fishing and wildlife, prevention of pollution, establishment of recreation areas, protection of water tables—in brief, the safeguarding of our Canadian heritage.

But without your cooperation, conservation will be just a word.

FARM NEWS

MRS. MABEL BORGSTROM LEAVING HALTON AND PEEL

It has been announced that Mrs. Mabel Borgstrom, Home Economist in Halton and Peel Counties, will be taking a year's leave of absence for further study.

Mrs. Borgstrom was appointed to the Home Economics Service of the Extension Branch in Halton, Peel and York counties in 1953, and served in the three counties until 1956. Since 1956, Mrs. Borgstrom has acted as Home Economist in Halton and Peel counties. During this time Mrs. Borgstrom has worked in connection with Junior Institute and Senior Institute programmes, and has supervised and directed the 4-H Homemaking Clubs programme.

The leave of absence will commence on June 1st. The appointment of a successor will be announced during the month of June.

HALTON COUNTY WEED CONTROL NEWS

By V. E. McArthur
County Weed Inspector

A BAD WEED?

We must admit that Rocket is spreading at an alarming rate in Halton County. While it belongs to the mustard family it differs from 'Wild Mustard' in that it flowers nearly a month earlier, has several roots and smooth leaves. 'Wild Mustard' has a single tap root and quite hairy leaves.

Many of our farmers are concerned about Yellow Rocket and try to keep it pulled when it first appears but when it becomes established they try to cut it before seeds ripen and in some cases the infested fields are used for grass silage. By these practices the plants are kept in check but Yellow Rocket being a perennial continues to persist. When it appears in meadows consisting of grass only, it can be killed quite readily by applying 8-10 ounces of 2, 4-D acid per acre; but in sod fields containing alfalfa or certain other clovers this method cannot be used in this amount of 2, 4-D per acre will damage the clovers. Do not underestimate this weed if it appears on your farm because once it gets started it will spread rapidly.

Yes "Yellow Rocket" is a bad weed and is recognized as such by the Field Crops Branch of the Ontario Department of Agriculture, who have it listed on the noxious list of the Ontario Weed Control Act.

The potatoes, grown in Canada from coast to coast, rank fifth in value among field crops in the Dominion.



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BEST ENGINE Every motor magazine has given Chevy's V8's unstinted praise. As SPORTS CAR ILLUSTRATED puts it: "Indeed, this device is surely the most wonderfully responsive engine available today at any price."

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(to be continued)