

Mr. GARDINER: In spite of what was read by the hon. member for Vegreville, I am quite satisfied in my own mind that Britain will still want at least 500,000,000 pounds in 1946. I should be sufficiently satisfied on that point that if we could not make a satisfactory agreement now covering the four years, we should not be in too much of a hurry. Conditions that may exist three or four years from now are uncertain so far as the British are concerned, as they are uncertain so far as we are concerned, and I would not be in favour of agreeing to an arrangement now which in two years we might find not in the interests of our people. If it gets too far over in one direction I do not think it would be good policy on our part to enter into an agreement now for the longer period of time. If it gets to the point where we think it will be to the advantage of everyone concerned to have the agreement made now for the longer period, of course we shall sign the agreement.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Then do I understand that there is not a four-year contract at the present time?

Mr. GARDINER: At the moment there is not a four-year contract signed; I corrected that statement to-day, and said that the final negotiations had not been completed.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Then what are we operating under at the present time?

Mr. GARDINER: We are operating under the two-year contract for 900,000,000 pounds.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Signed when?

Mr. GARDINER: Some time about February, I think.

Mr. QUELCH: Yesterday the minister expressed great surprise that hon. members did not know that an assurance had been given for the next four years, saying that it had been advertised all across the country. Now we are told that the contract is for only two years. Has he been advertising all across the country that it is a four-year contract?

Mr. GARDINER: I said that it had been advertised across the country that a four-year contract was under negotiation. Last night I thought I would be able to say to-day that it had been completed, but I find it has not.

Mr. QUELCH: Then is the minister in a position to give an absolute assurance that there will be a market and that we shall be able to maintain the price, despite the fact that the contract is for only two years? Certainly he was very much surprised yesterday that hon. members did not know of the four-year contract. To-day we are told that the contract is not in existence, so that appar-

[Mr. Jackman.]

ently the hon. members who spoke yesterday were right.

Mr. GARDINER: Of course yesterday hon. members were not talking about a four-year contract; they were talking in general terms about assurances having been given the farmers that there would be a market. I dealt with more than hogs yesterday; I said that there was a two-year contract on eggs, a two-year contract on cheese, a four-year contract under negotiation in connection with hogs, which I thought was nearer conclusion than it is, and also a contract under discussion with regard to beef. All these matters are being considered by the government. It is not a question of losing sight of any of these things.

Mr. QUELCH: But we were arguing that the assurance should be for a longer period than two years, because a two-year period does not guarantee a farmer against the costs involved. We were urging that a four-year guarantee should be given. Now, even though a four-year contract has not been consummated, the minister does feel in a position to give the farmers the assurance that there will be a good market for the next four years?

Mr. GARDINER: I will give the same assurance I gave last evening, upon which I based the argument to which reference is now being made. I said that the Prime Minister had announced by radio, and other ministers had announced, that we were to have floor prices under farm products. That is the real assurance. That does not mean necessarily that we shall be able to sell the product at that price; it may mean that we shall have to take money out of the treasury after the war in order to give the farmer the floor return, whether or not the market can provide that price.

Mr. QUELCH: And I suppose it may mean that the guaranteed price will apply only to a certain quota. It may not mean that you will take an unlimited quantity at that price.

Mr. GARDINER: At the moment I should not like to say whether or not it may mean quotas; that is a matter which will have to be dealt with later. The main guarantee is that there will be floor prices under farm products.

Item agreed to.

Dairy products board—administration, \$21,690.

Mr. QUELCH: Will the winter rates be continued during the summer months?

Mr. GARDINER: The rates were announced some months ago. The rate on whole milk, fluid milk, for the summer months will be thirty-five cents in the areas in which it was fifty cents in the winter time and twenty-five cents in those areas where it was twenty-five