

Supply—Agriculture

Canada are paying these high prices, and apparently it is a fact that it is not the farmer who is making all this money, but somebody else. The prices board could well afford to investigate the situation to see where the robbery is occurring. A prices commission sat here last year. When one hears the Canadian retail price for meat, and the fact that we shipped 400,000 head of cattle to the United States and paid a slight duty on them, and when one learns that the United States consumer buys these meat products at a lower price than the Canadian consumer pays, then it is almost time that the government set up a fact-finding committee, including representatives of agriculture, to investigate the exorbitant high cost of living in Canada today.

Mr. Gardiner: This is not just the item upon which that matter should be discussed, but I think that I probably should correct the impression that may have been created. Speaking this afternoon someone—I think from the C.C.F. group—suggested that we should have some proof that an undertaking given to this house by the previous Prime Minister and myself is being carried out. That undertaking was that over a certain period of time after the war, and after prices for farm products had gone down in the United States, the farmers of Canada would still receive something more than the farmers in the United States were receiving. The reason for that was, as has been stated by one of the members on this side of the house, I think it was the member for The Battlefords, that we succeeded in stabilizing farm prices in Canada. Everyone agrees that we did not permit farm prices to go up as high as they went in the United States for a few months following the removal of their controls. During that period many members on the other side of the house suggested that we were robbing the farmers of this country because we did not permit these prices to rise.

During that period, it is true, the Prime Minister of that day, and I as Minister of Agriculture, said that for some time after prices in the United States did come down to our levels an effort would be made to maintain our prices at a stable level in order that some of these returns might go back to the farmers. I am not sure that the hon. member has selected a good item when he takes beef, because the hon. member for Souris did not read all the items in the article he referred to this afternoon. I happened to have the article in my pocket when he was reading it, and I took it out of my pocket and checked it rather carefully. In so far as pork products are concerned, it is true that prices in Canada are somewhat higher than they

are in the United States. For example, it is stated in this article from the *Winnipeg Free Press* that sugar-cured sliced rindless side bacon at St. Paul is 43 to 49 cents a pound whereas in Winnipeg it is 47 cents a half pound. In other words, the price of bacon in Winnipeg is just about double what it is in St. Paul.

It is stated in this article that the claim is made by the packers of Canada that what you are talking about when you talk about Canadian bacon is quite a different product from what you are talking about when you speak of bacon in St. Paul. That may be true, but they go on to say that some people like United States bacon just as well as Canadian bacon.

On the other hand, taking spring lamb, it is 59 cents in St. Paul and 59 cents in Winnipeg. If you take a pot roast of beef, commercial grade, it is 39 cents in St. Paul and 38 cents in Winnipeg. There is not very much difference there. A T-bone steak, commercial grade, is 59 cents in St. Paul and 57 cents in Winnipeg. In so far as beef products are concerned, they appear to be almost the same, or possibly slightly lower in Canada than they are in the United States.

Mr. Ferguson: Have you considered the value of the United States dollar, as admitted by this government? It is higher.

Mr. Gardiner: The two currencies were supposed to be at par at that time.

Mr. Ferguson: No matter what they were supposed to be, the fact was that they were not.

Mr. Gardiner: I must say, in the light of what my hon. friend has said, that I used that same argument myself in another place the other day, and I was informed that ninety per cent of the transactions between Canada and the United States are on the official level, which is par. I presume that transactions such as those between cattle dealers on this side of the line and cattle dealers on the other side have been on the official basis. When I go to the United States and spend some money and try to pass a Canadian dollar it is true they cut me down to 90 cents right now, and have done so in the past; but in so far as official transactions are concerned they are carried on on the official basis, which is par. Therefore the prices at St. Paul are comparable.

I say as far as beef is concerned there is not any great difference. I should like to say, in reply to those who represent constituencies that are largely composed of persons who are consumers and not producers, that we thought two years ago, and we still think, that as