

believe the beef is handled too much from the time it leaves the rancher until it reaches the consumer.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): I was very pleased to note one suggestion they made is that the sale of beef to the freezer market should be encouraged. They are promoting the idea of selling whole hind and front quarters. This is a program they have just begun to promote. I think there are real possibilities here in respect of cutting out many of the middle people so that the rancher will get his product more directly to the consumer. This would benefit not only the rancher but also the consumer.

I have also been interested in the possibility of there being a full-scale inquiry in respect of the beef market situation. I am glad to see there is much consensus in respect of an inquiry of this nature. I feel great benefits would accrue to the rancher as well as the consumer if there should be a full-scale inquiry, particularly in respect of what happens to the beef after it leaves the farm gate.

I am not in favour of a marketing board concept. The legislation is available to the producers if they should decide to avail themselves of it. They could use the provisions of the Farm Products Marketing Agencies Act. The cattlemen do not want to do this, and I do not believe this is necessary. However, there is a real need for an inquiry in respect of the marketing of beef after it leaves the farm gate.

Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, as a farmer and producer I am very pleased to enter this debate this evening. Although I am not a producer of beef, over the years I have seen many producers of different products in much the same situation as the beef producer is in today. There are many ranchers in my riding which is similar to that of the previous speaker, the hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo (Mr. Marchand). It is in the dry belt of British Columbia.

At this time, for the benefit of the hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo, I should like to set the record straight in respect of what happened last year concerning the drought and its effect on the beef producers in this area. It was one of the most difficult times these ranchers experienced. There was a combination of frost and dryness. Not only were their ranges and hayfields dried out, but also the frost killed their alfalfa and the fields they cultivated. In British Columbia the provincial government awarded a transportation subsidy to those ranchers who haul in hay from—

● (2210)

Mr. Benjamin: "Tomahawk" said he was interested in culling.

Mr. Whittaker: I am giving the government of British Columbia a little credit, Mr. Speaker, and members of the same party in this House should take it or we will start talking about the land freeze. This transportation subsidy was \$15 a ton. But then they came to the federal Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and asked him to help them with it. At the same time I was pleading with the minister to match the subsidy, but instead of doing that he paid

Slaughter of Calves

half of what had already been paid. He could have done more for the rancher at that time, but he did not. It cost some of these people up to \$100,000 to feed their basic herds, and they had to do it because there were officials from the federal government telling them not to count on selling their herds, but to feed them. The Minister of Agriculture was telling them how wonderful agriculture was in Canada, what he was going to do for them, and to keep producing. But today the bankers are telling the same people that they must sell. The market price today is lower than it was a year ago. This constitutes a disaster for the ranchers.

I know from experience that in the past other producers have found themselves in a similar situation to that of the rancher today. We have been pleading with the federal government for years to bring in agricultural policies which will give the industry a solid base. There have been many passionate speeches over the years on the plight of the farmer and the plight of agriculture, but really we have not seen any action to remedy the situation. No good, concrete farm policies have been produced to sustain the industry in times of trouble. There have been the shotgun programs which the minister spoke of this evening. If that kind of program had done anything to help the beef industry, we would not be here this evening. The minister can talk until the cows come home about the subsidy, the surcharge, the stabilization program—but he did not offer any solution.

We have heard from the government that we need high production in order to solve inflation. When we get high production in eggs and in beef, what happens? If the government is going to encourage high production at the farm level, it should have programs ready to take care of overproduction. The percentage of overproduction does not have to be very high to give rise to a situation such as we have experienced in Quebec.

We heard the hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo (Mr. Marchand) say tonight that the rancher should cull his old cows. If he did that today, he would get five cents per pound, which is about \$28 or \$30 per animal. Mr. Speaker, that hardly pays for transportation to the yard. I am very pleased to associate myself with the remarks of the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave). Because he knows the beef industry very well, he made an excellent presentation of the problem and what should be done about it.

The Minister of Agriculture told us what he has done, but it has not solved the situation. He did not say anything about what should be done, however, or what is going to be done. Last week in the agriculture committee I asked the minister about situations such as the one that caused this debate. He said that the stabilization program should help the farmers indirectly, and that there was the hope that the cow-calf operator selling his calves on the feeder market would get some security. Mr. Speaker, the producers cannot live on "should" and "hope": they must have something more concrete than that. We have heard the fancy speeches about what good citizens of Canada the producers are, and how they feed the nation. But that is not good enough.

The stabilization program will only cover about 50 per cent of the cattle going to market. It will not cover cattle