

providing that shipping to take away our pork products, and also to take, as well, this additional beef. We have been attempting to secure beef and to secure pork products, and to have them at the ports to be taken away by the British ships when they arrive. So that in so far as one condition upon which I made my statement in 1942 is concerned, I would say that we have not yet arrived at the position where the British do not want the surplus meat that we have. We have not yet arrived at that point.

Dealing with the other side of the question, as to what the Americans think about it, I would call attention to what I said last night in connection with packing plants. American packing plants are working overtime to approximately the same extent as our packing plants in Canada. They are having difficulty in finding labour to man their plants, and we are having difficulty in getting labour to man our plants. They find themselves with the greatest live stock population, particularly cattle, that they have ever had in their history—just as we find ourselves with the greatest live stock population we have ever had, and particularly cattle, in our history.

So that the problems on their side of the line are the same as those on our side. I have not any doubt that if someone went to an American packing plant on the other side of the line or to an American drover and said, "Are you prepared to come to Canada and buy at lower prices than you have to pay in the United States and then take them on to the American market and sell them there?" he would get the natural answer. But in the United States they have a government, as we have one in Canada. We have spent much time in discussing these problems back and forth, and we think we understand the point of view of the United States. Believing that we understand it from the discussions we have had, we are not asking them to say what we ought to do with our cattle. We are trying to deal with our own problems, by doing something that will not multiply their problems. We are trying at the same time to satisfy the British, who want all the surplus beef that we can send to them. We are trying to do that. We are now entering into an agreement with Britain—and there will not be any great difficulty about it—which will suit their needs and at the same time suit our own necessities; and if we are able to reach an agreement of that kind I am quite sure that the orderly marketing of our beef on the British market will be a possibility from now at least until the war ends. If during that period our production increases to the point where the Americans can take some of our meat, and

[Mr. Gardiner.]

we are extremely desirous of that taking place, I do not think there is anyone on this side of the line who will have any desire to prevent that meat from getting into that market.

In the meantime we are trying to suit the needs of all parties concerned to the best of our ability, and I think we have done a fairly good job despite the fact that the hon. member for Lethbridge thinks we have bungled in relation to our beef and beef cattle policies. We believe that in giving what is obviously a price which compares favourably with any price we have obtained under similar circumstances in the past, the policy is not something that works to the disadvantage of our farmers. We believe, too, that just as we now have a flat return throughout the whole year for hogs, a flat return for cheese, and a flat return for some other farm products, without prices going up and down at different seasons of the year, if at all possible we should get a flat return on beef. If I had time this afternoon to put the prices on the record it would be found that the policy we are now following is establishing a flat price for beef, and since the demand for beef continues in Britain throughout the whole year there is not the necessity of taking care of great rushes of cattle on to that market at one time and of shortages at another. We can take in beef as it comes just as fast as our plants can handle it, and when it is taken in we can freeze it and ship it out to Britain as the boats are available, and thus market the product orderly throughout the whole twelve months of the year. That is the answer, Mr. Chairman, which I wish to give to the questions.

Mr. BLACKMORE: I should not be surprised if the minister finds it inconvenient to answer my questions; I may have to answer them myself before we finish this debate. I think the minister will have a hard time answering the answers which I will give. May I deal with the minister's rejoinder?

Even his remarks to-day give indication to the house and the country that there is a very strong demand for beef, that there is a demand for all the beef that Canadian farmers can produce. In the light of that fact, and in the light of the fact that a year ago beef was rationed in Canada and the price of beef was very high to those who wished to buy it to eat, and the great deal of talk there was of the need of beef for Britain—I ask you in the light of those facts how the ordinary farmer, the ordinary feeder, could possibly conceive that in the spring of 1944 he would not be able even to sell his beef. There were thou-