

Foot-and-mouth disease

already provides for the other compensation, the farmer will get compensation under this legislation.

Mr. Argue: The words are, "notwithstanding anything". Notwithstanding anything whatever in the Animal Contagious Diseases Act the farmer will get some nebulous thing that is fair and reasonable.

Mr. Gardiner: More money.

Mr. Argue: Perhaps more money—let us hope so. If the minister is going to be as generous as he says he is to be, then he should have no hesitation in putting it in the legislation.

Another thing that the whole cattle industry in Canada is interested in is this. What is going to happen to the price of cattle within the next six months, within the next year and within the next two years? In an emergency such as this the government should do no less than guarantee the farmers the same commercial value for all livestock as prevailed on the markets of Canada preceding the outbreak of this disease. Farmers from one end of Canada to the other are being affected by the foot-and-mouth disease and its economic ramifications. The thing that this legislation should be doing is placing a floor under cattle prices throughout Canada, a floor to the producer and guaranteed for at least two years.

I say to the minister that if the government does at some future time decide to stabilize the cattle prices, that is to place a floor under cattle prices, I hope he is a little more generous than he was when he put the floor price under hogs. In my opinion the floor that was placed under hogs a few weeks ago was a floor so low as to prohibit farmers from making a decent return from their hogs. I say that the cattle industry of Canada needs an adequate floor, needs a floor as high as the market that prevailed before the outbreak of this disease. We need compensation for the farmers whose livestock are infected; we need a proper guarantee of minimum prices to the livestock industry throughout Canada, and we need some assurance from the government that farmers affected by the quarantine who cannot market their cattle, who cannot market their hogs, who cannot market their grain, are provided with an income and some compensation for the loss that they will experience because of the outbreak of this particular disease.

Mr. Dewar: I had not intended to say anything in this discussion because I am not an expert like some of the previous speakers. But I have just returned to Ottawa from the Qu'Appelle constituency, where about two-thirds of the quarantined farms are located.

To put this thing in its proper perspective, perhaps I had better start at the beginning and say when this thing was first brought to my attention directly as a member of parliament. Both Mr. Waas and Mr. Smith are friends of mine. They know where I live; they come to my house and I go to their houses. I might say that they both voted for me. Last Thursday Mr. Smith telephoned my house and said that he wished to have an interview with me. I told him to come on down. We spent two hours together. I can assure you that in that time not one word of unfair criticism, such as has been voiced here today by some of the members of the other side of the house, was spoken by Mr. Smith. He merely told me the story of his herd, and in substance it was what the Minister of Agriculture said here today. Then Mr. Waas' cattle became infected, and a short time later this infection appeared in Mr. Smith's cattle. As the minister has said, both these men voluntarily accepted the quarantine—they were obliged to. They have accepted that quarantine and they have abided by it. With respect to Mr. Smith's cattle, less than three weeks' time elapsed between the time that his cattle showed the disease and when they showed they were free of it.

In other words, any loss in weight they had had gone. None of Mr. Smith's cattle had died, and the same applies to Mr. Waas' cattle. There is not a man in the House of Commons or a man in Canada today who, not knowing that there had been disease and infection in that area, could go into those herds and see a thing wrong with them. No fewer than seven veterinarians have examined Mr. Smith's cattle, and all of them have said the same thing, that those cattle have not the foot-and-mouth disease.

I am inclined to agree with them, and for this reason: Surely to heavens, if as far back as November of last year some seventy-five or eighty-five cattle were affected with the foot-and-mouth disease, today one would expect at least one of them to have some sort of indication or sign to show that it had had the disease. Some might have died. But the fact is that none of them has died.

As I said, this was brought to my attention last Thursday, February 28. On February 29 Mr. Waas phoned me, and we carried on a telephone conversation. At that time he was not concerned about the government's not having tagged this as the foot-and-mouth disease, or tagged it as anything else. He was merely concerned about what was going to be contained in this measure. Their concern, granted, was with the fact that their herds would have to be destroyed. Essentially, their main concern was as to the compensation