

Foot-and-mouth disease

Despite the fact that some of my friends say that I am interested in some other problems, and although I have been interested in a great many activities in this dominion, there is no interest that is quite so close to my life as is that of agriculture.

There is no one who knows anything about agriculture who does not know that the foundation of that great basic industry is the livestock industry. For a quarter of a century I have listened in this house to members from western Canada telling us about the great potentialities of wheat and about Canada being the great bread basket of the world. I have even heard my gallant friend, the Minister of Agriculture, tell about wheat, of how people could almost live on wheat alone, of how bread and bread alone would almost sustain you, and say that when the cattle business was washed up, you could live on cereals. I know that he will recall that speech. It was one of his best. That was when the situation looked black and when he thought that even Canadians could live on wheat alone. But, Mr. Chairman, when you hit at the livestock industry, you hit at the great basis of agriculture. If I have not done anything else in my life, I have at least tried to be a livestock man. I listened to the hon. member from a Toronto constituency speak about the consumer. I have been interested as a farmer and as a pure-bred livestock producer. I have no more right than has anyone else to expect from the government something to which I am not entitled if my herds were hit by this dread disease. I hope that no one will think that I am speaking purely from a personal standpoint. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, I note, is in his seat. He has more cattle than I have; even though they are not quite as high class, he expects to turn them over fast. He is probably going to take a greater loss than I have taken; but each of us will take a loss which is greater than either of us at one time ever expected to make.

This matter is something that far transcends politics, Mr. Chairman. It hits at the economy of this country, at an industry that brought into this country \$125 million to \$150 million per year in itself, to say nothing of the diversified advantages connected with it. I can well recall, as I know the Minister of Agriculture will also, one of the members on this side of the house who was later made a senator saying that western Canadians should soon find out that they cannot keep agriculture sound on wheat alone. You will recall, Mr. Chairman, that he mentioned the cowless,

sowless, chickenless farmer, and said that you can never return the fertility of the soil if you have not a sound livestock industry.

As I know some of the members in this house on this side will recall, for many years I have talked about the importance of maintaining a balanced agriculture by maintaining a sound livestock industry. I have harped on the subject so much that some may have thought it had become an obsession; but after observing the conversion of the Minister of Agriculture himself and finding that at last he even became a livestock man, I ceased to voice those sentiments because I thought the battle was won. But I now realize that not only had this government and the party which sits to your right almost ruined the livestock industry by New Zealand butter back in 1930, but they have almost oleomargarined the dairy industry out of business recently. I am hesitant to say why.

I listened to the nimble performance of the Minister of Agriculture this afternoon. He was quieter in voice and more silent in manner than I have ever known him to be in this house. Knowing him so well, I know that his case was weak. Otherwise he would have been much more vociferous and much louder in his remarks. I know he was touching the matter tenderly. He was wondering about the mistakes of the local veterinarians, wondering about the bureaucracy built up in his own department, and wondering who was to blame, but knowing at heart that somebody must be to blame for a catastrophe that may mean the loss of millions of dollars at a time when our economy is fading just a little bit, at a time when things are going a little bit slowly.

I listened to the hon. member for Fort William. I know something about Fort William. There are not nearly as many cows in the Fort William district as there are voters. I know that he could glibly pass it by, but in my riding I will say to my hon. friend that things are a great deal different. When we are in Fort William, he and I are interested in finding labour for a large number of men, in finding a happy living for them and ensuring a high standard of living for industrial workers. But in Dufferin-Simcoe, as in other places that I could name in this dominion—as, for instance, in the riding of the hon. member who spoke this afternoon and who is himself a veterinary scientist; I refer to the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth, who laid the cards on the table before this house in a scientific and not a political manner—the situation is different. This strikes at the very lifeblood of the economy of the riding of the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth, of the