

Foot-and-mouth disease

There is one other vital matter that I wish to take up at this time, and I may have something more to say in connection with it later on in the week. I refer to the compensation paid to farmers whose stock will be or has already been destroyed. We are told that the Department of Finance will have a member on the board that is sitting. While they will have something to do with the amount of money being paid out, we find that they will also have something to do—at least, they have in the past—with taking away from those farmers some of the money that is paid to them for their livestock and other products.

Because this is a matter that is forced upon the farmers and is entirely detrimental to their interests, I am now suggesting that the government—the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National Revenue and their colleagues—give favourable consideration to exempting from income tax any amount that may be paid by way of compensation. I think this is absolutely necessary. Otherwise the government will be collecting income tax on capital investment. While the farmers affected will not be able to replace their stock until the danger of the outbreak is entirely removed, eventually they will have to reinvest this amount of compensation for the purpose of re-stocking their farms. I believe that is a sound argument and one that should be taken into consideration by the government.

Just because farmers at the present time are receiving fairly good prices for their livestock—in fact, very good prices—as compared with those they received in the depression years and which in the past have been used for comparison purposes by members of the government, I do not feel that the government should now kill the goose that laid the golden egg. In all parts of Canada we are dependent upon the livestock products of the western provinces. It is true that livestock are shipped to some other parts of the country for feeding purposes, but the prairie provinces are the main source of supply.

I believe that the government would be well advised to take these suggestions into consideration. I believe that everything possible should be done to stamp out the disease just as soon as it is possible to do so. If it costs the country a little bit of money to bring about that result, I think that is quite all right. The livestock industry must be carried on. At the present time it is worth millions of dollars. The government has collected from it millions of dollars in income tax. I think one of the first duties of the government is to see that the disease is stamped out and that the livestock industry continues in a prosperous condition.

[Mr. Fair.]

Mr. Cruickshank: Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a word on this matter, probably from a different angle. I represent a dairy farming section, not beef country, and I would not want the impression to go abroad in Canada that the farmers are here with a “gimme-gimme” attitude. That sort of thing might have been done in the past. I think too much emphasis has been put on the record of the farmers. I do not know whether this particular individual in question is a carrier of the disease or not. There are in this house only two or three men who are medical men and who are competent to pass judgment on the matter. But suppose he was a carrier. He came from the city of Vancouver, and according to press reports he was looking for work on the farm. From Vancouver, if he was looking for employment on the farm, the natural place for him to go would be to Fraser valley. The hon. member for Lake Centre laughs. I am talking from the serious point of view, not from the selfish point of view of the recompense of one or two farmers. It is conservatively estimated that the Fraser valley produces 75 per cent of the milk consumed in the whole province of British Columbia. For instance, Coast-Capilano gets all its milk from Fraser valley.

Mr. MacDougall: What about Burrard?

Mr. Cruickshank: Just a minute, now. The people of Vancouver will be very proud of that Burrard interjection. I tell you, Mr. Chairman, we have a milk shed only some 65 miles long—it is not all in my riding. Part of it is in the riding of the hon. member for New Westminster.

An hon. Member*: What has that to do with foot-and-mouth disease?

Mr. Cruickshank: I did not interrupt you. It is 35 miles wide. I wonder how serious it would be to the consumer. We even ship milk to Kamloops, to Skeena and Prince Rupert. We ship it to Victoria and to Nanaimo from the Fraser valley. Just imagine how serious it would be to the mothers and the people of British Columbia if that disease should get into our province. As I said, in a small area 35 miles wide and 65 miles long, if the disease got into one farm say in the centre of the valley it would be only 48 hours or so before the whole valley would be quarantined and there would be no fluid milk for British Columbia. It is not all a matter of recompense to the farmer. Some of the members representing the consumer ridings should have something to say about this.

I am not particularly worried about what has happened in the past, although I know what I would do with two or three of the officials of the Department of Agriculture if

* See page 109.