

Animal Contagious Diseases

Arnold Stansell in co-operation with the joint dairy breeds organization. The Minister of Agriculture and many members will recognize Mr. Stansell as one of North America's most successful breeders of Ayrshire cattle. It is my intention and the intention of the hon. member for Elgin, when the bill is before the committee, to request that he have the opportunity of appearing as a witness to explain this proposal in detail to all members of the committee.

On November 27, 1974, the minister officiated at the opening of the Animal Diseases Research Institute and graphically described the 1952 experience with foot and mouth disease. As I indicated at the outset, for this type of debate perhaps we need this kind of experience to generate interest in the importance of this legislation. The minister described at the time the cost in terms of cattle lost, taxpayers' money spent to eradicate the disease, loss of exports of livestock and livestock products for a full year, resulting in a bill totalling approximately \$900 million. That experience is a constant reminder of the necessity to have legislation that will keep this country free of serious animal disease and to eradicate those diseases that remain with us.

In light of this, during the examination of the Supplementary Estimates B, 1974-75, on November 28 of last year I made reference to the problem of John's disease which, to my knowledge, has affected at least four herds in my area. As part of the testimony, Dr. Wells, the veterinary director-general, Health of Animals Branch of the department, stated:

Mr. Chairman, in accordance with the provisions of the Animal Contagious Diseases Act, all infectious and contagious diseases are reportable. However, the specific list of diseases that are in the act and listed as main diseases are those for which we have national programs such as brucellosis, tuberculosis, hog cholera, foot and mouth disease, where action is taken to eradicate the disease from the country. In the case of John's disease, it is an infectious and contagious disease, and therefore reportable, and if the owner wishes to have the infection cleared up, we are prepared to provide the program to that owner.

If and when the time comes that a better system of eradicating the disease comes about, and when we can clear some of the problems facing the department with respect to disease, it may be possible to move into a national program with respect to John's.

I want to emphasize that it is my impression that in my area this disease is highly contagious, consisting of what appears in many instances to be a virulent organism. Responses to my questions at that time indicated that the method of treatment is herd eradication, which is similar to the procedure adopted for brucellosis and tuberculosis. It seems to me that if the minister is desirous of retaining an animal health status that is the best in the world in his view, then John's disease should be added to the list of diseases outlined in the bill. Again I ask the minister to give serious consideration to this particular program and to see that it is pursued during the study of the bill by the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

During the same meeting, the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) and I raised the very serious and important question concerning income tax on moneys received for herds destroyed as a result of brucellosis, tuberculosis or John's disease. As the minister knows, if these herds are not replaced in the same calendar year, then the money received from the government by way of compensation is taxed. I am well aware that it is the government's intention to encourage the farmer to reinvest these sums in

establishing his herd, but in many instances this is impossible to accomplish in the calendar year. For example, the lapse of time between the slaughter of the herd and the procedures that must be followed to ensure a healthy environment, free of disease, for housing the new herd may well extend beyond the calendar year, and in many instances the replacement animal that the farmer wants, particularly in the case of dairy herds, cannot be procured during the calendar year. I know the minister is concerned about this problem, and on November 28 he indicated that he was negotiating this point with the departments of national revenue and finance. Since this is an important component of the compensation problem, I urge the minister and the government to correct this present inequity before the bill receives third reading. I know we will be anxious to pursue this point at the committee level.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that we support the importance of this piece of legislation, and I commend the minister and the department of their interest in maintaining healthy animals in Canada. But again I re-emphasize that we believe the present bill can be substantially improved and I have attempted to define some areas of concern regarding various components. We will also be making some constructive proposals during committee stage. Finally, may I say it is our intention to work in a positive manner and as rapidly as possible to implement the improvements I have suggested.

● (1450)

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, before I make a few comments about this particular bill I should like to refer to something the minister said just before lunch when he introduced the measure. He alluded to what I am sure was the foot and mouth disease outbreak in Regina and the tremendous loss that took place back in 1952. Let me say to the minister and his staff who are here in the House of Commons at this time that his words took me back very vividly to that time. The minister spoke about the tremendous cost to this country. He did not put a dollar value on it, but somebody behind me mentioned \$1 billion. It could well have been that amount. Even if it cost that much to clean up the outbreak, I would suggest that is peanuts—and I mean it—compared to the loss in inventory value to the cattle industry in Canada at that time.

In October, 1951, fed cattle and feeder cattle were selling for \$35 and above—at that time the highest price by far in our history. I can remember selling feeder yearlings going at 800 pounds for \$36.20 a hundredweight. That foot and mouth outbreak occurred when an immigrant whose first name was Willie came over to that Regina farm and threw out some dried-up sausage. Within a few days the value of the cattle dropped by half. Fed cattle dropped to \$18 a hundred and feeder cattle to about the same. It was a great loss. I only remind the minister about this to show the tremendous importance of the Health of Animals Branch to the Canadian economy as a whole. His remarks took me back a few years and prompted these opening comments.

By and large, this is a good bill in that it updates many obsolete portions of the act. It incorporates many new developments, procedures and techniques that are now part of our total Canadian livestock industry. Perhaps the most critical thing I could say about the bill at this time is that it is two years overdue. I suggest that the minister

[Mr. Holmes.]