

asked the officials to do nothing more about the organization of the shipment of horses until they were given further instructions. I was sitting in a booth in the little restaurant just across from the railway station in Assiniboia. One of the officials of the government was sitting in the next booth, and I heard him outline to a group of men the whole plan which no one, with the exception of a very few people, was supposed to know anything about. This was on Thursday. I took the trouble to step into the booth and tell him as well as the other men that the plan had been discontinued, and that further information in regard to the matter would be provided in due course. In spite of that, when I reached Regina on Saturday, after making a trip through the entire drought area, I found another article on the front page of the newspaper setting out the points at which the horses were to be assembled, and finally it was indicated that the federal government would send men there for the purpose, I think the word was, of checking the horses.

That item, however, was put out by the provincial government and it was then I checked the matter over with the minister, his deputy and some others. I was told that this preliminary work had been done not by us but by the government at Regina, in asking these men to assemble their horses at certain places; and I may say that suggestion was put forward in the discussions which took place between our men and the government officials. Those discussions had gone forward to the point where I suggested that probably we would have to go through with it on that basis in a certain part of the area, but that in my opinion this was not a suitable plan under which to buy horses. I added that immediately I returned to Ottawa I would discuss the matter fully with our own men. I discussed it with some of them and indicated that we would only carry out the plan in the limited area in connection with which it had been discussed, and that then we would set up some other plan unless this first suggestion was found to work better than I thought would be the case.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I must say it did work a little better than I thought it would. We had purchases made at the long list of points set out in the return brought down a few days ago in reply to questions asked by the hon. member for Wood Mountain. After going over that statement, I think he will agree that there was only one point at which purchases were made from a private dealer; in that case I believe eighteen horses were purchased at Lafèche from Mr. Walter Stern. I do not know whether or not Mr. Stern is

a Montreal man; as a matter of fact I had never heard of him until I heard of this horse deal, but my information was that he was a Moose Jaw man who bought horses for dealers in Montreal. I may be wrong in that; it is only information which was given me, but I do not think it makes much difference in any event. After all, men are free to do business anywhere in Canada, whether they live in Montreal, Toronto or anywhere else.

The real fact of the matter is that the Saskatchewan government printed the first statements that were to be put out. In checking those statements after the first printing, I corrected them in some slight particulars, and then the statements were printed in greater numbers by ourselves and distributed in the areas which already had been more or less canvassed. I submit to this committee, that the farmers must be presumed to have read the particulars, because otherwise they would not have done what my hon. friend says they did. They read the posters and, in accordance with the instructions, brought in horses of certain types and weights.

Mr. HARRIS (Danforth): If the minister would permit a question, I presume that also included horses under 1,300 pounds which were to be slaughtered for purposes of food, for shipment to Belgium?

Mr. GARDINER: No, not the horses we were purchasing; we were not purchasing any for slaughter. Those horses are purchased for slaughter at Swift Current, but we are not purchasing any of those; we are simply purchasing the horses which are sent overseas for work purposes. The suggestion is that some farmers, after having obtained all that information, sold for \$60 horses which, according to the information, they might have sold for \$80 or \$90. Well, I suggest that if, after having read those posters, a man sold a horse to anybody for \$60—

An hon. MEMBER: The government buyer turned them down.

Mr. GARDINER: Then that would indicate that the horse was worth only \$60. If a farmer brought in a horse which he was prepared to sell to anybody for \$60 I can only assume that the horse was not up to the standards we set, and for which we definitely stated the farmer would get \$80 or \$90 and up to \$150.

The position is that some eighteen horses were bought from Mr. Stern, and from what has just been said I assume that another eighteen were bought from farmers in the surrounding district, making up two carloads out of something over three hundred head.