

May I speak briefly in connection with that question? Yesterday the minister read a list of prices of beef at certain times in the year, in each of the years from the beginning of the war until now. I suggested that he give at the same time the cost of those beeves when they entered the feed lots the previous fall. The minister indicated that he would give such a list, but I think he must have overlooked doing it.

Mr. GARDINER: I am just coming to it.

Mr. BLACKMORE: That is fine. I do not wish to be unfair to the minister, and I am sure that he does not wish to be unfair to the beef producers. But it is obvious that if the farmers have to pay eight and a half cents a pound for fat cows coming off the grass, and then have to feed them during the winter, into February or March, and sell them at six and a half to seven and a half cents, the stage is all set for calamity, so far as feeders of fat cows are concerned.

Was it for some time almost impossible in Alberta for feeders of fat cows to get bids on their fat cows? Whose duty and responsibility was it to buy fat cows for the government to keep up the price of cows? Had that body the authority to buy?

Then, with respect to heavy steers, our troubles in my area were aggravated this year. Here are some of the questions on this point: Did the Minister of Agriculture announce he wished stockmen to keep their steers a year to grow into heavy beef? Was it difficult to sell heavy steers in southern Alberta in January and February, 1944? The answer to each of these questions, according to my information, is yes. If that is so, then obviously the minister's administration went to pieces with respect to fat steers, and the producers were simply betrayed.

Now, with respect to handyweight steers, through the latter part of February and early in March, 1944, was there a period during which buyers evinced very little interest in handyweight steers? And were the causes of this stalemate the lack of ships and of storage space? I expect that those questions would be answered yes. Then I wish to ask this question: Notwithstanding that, were steers bought when prices came down low enough to be highly lucrative to buyers, and was the market situation for meat, both beef and mutton, serious in southern Alberta around March 15?

It is reported to me that the minister in a letter dated February 15, 1944, written to the president of the council of western beef producers, used these words:

At the time this was done (when the United States market was closed) I stated publicly that just as soon as farmers had cattle to

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deliver to that market, and the Americans were prepared to take them, I would be prepared to back farmers in insisting that that market be opened.

Did the minister use those words? Has he at any time backed the farmers in insisting that the United States market be opened? If so, on what occasion; if not, why not? The answer may be that the United States did not want this. I wonder what evidence can be adduced from various places in the United States to show that they did not want them. The information I have is that there are places in the United States where they were sold out of beef, and were much at a loss to know what to do to get it.

Did the deputy coordinator of primary products, wartime prices and trade board, assure lamb feeders during the 1943-44 season that supporting purchases of meat had been authorized and made at levels comparable with floor prices for carcasses, namely one and a quarter cents below the ceiling price? This is a very important point. Were such purchases made? Did the price of live lambs advance, as a reflection of these purchases? If the answer to those questions happens to be of the right kind, then they write a sad story.

Has the Department of Agriculture or any agency of that department at any time announced to the public what prices of live lambs and cattle ought to be? If not, why not? Otherwise, what protection can feeders or growers of lambs, calves and feeder cattle have?

May I just comment upon that for a moment or two. In the fall, when it comes time to fill feed lots, prospective feeders naturally go to the various markets with the object of buying stock. They begin to bid, and sometimes prices are bid up to a considerable height. In that way some people are tempted to buy at prices which are rather too high. But when prospective buyers do not know what the prices are to be, and have no definite idea what the prices of the finished products will be, or indeed whether they will be able to sell the finished products, they are utterly helpless in the matter of using their judgment as to what prices they should pay, and how many stock to buy to put into the feeding lots.

If the minister will prepare careful answers for all those questions he will then pave the way for a more intimate discussion on this whole matter at a later time which, I promise him, I shall be glad to enter into.

Mr. GARDINER: Mr. Chairman, if I were to prepare detailed answers to the questions which have been asked by the hon. member, I would have to ask the hon. member either