

Foot-and-mouth disease

What assurance have we as livestock dealers in this country that we are going to be protected in future? I have always understood that no one could bring animals across the border without a careful inspection. For fifty years we have never thought of foot-and-mouth disease being imported into this country from the United States. If our veterinary authorities are not able to diagnose foot-and-mouth disease in less than three months what assurance have we that cattle which have been imported from the United States are not diseased? Were the veterinarians at the border smarter than the veterinarians in western Canada? Were they smarter than Dr. Childs or Dr. Mitchell or the other men who should get their heads together and find out what has been going on?

I leave this thought with the Minister of Agriculture, and no one in this house will grasp its significance more quickly. If the United States put a ban on our livestock going to that country because of foot-and-mouth disease, they will not be liable to lift it any sooner if some congressmen can say that we had foot-and-mouth disease in Canada for three months before we knew it. Stop and think over that one. A congressman can say the records show that on November 26 we had a disease that looked so much like foot-and-mouth disease that the local veterinaries could not distinguish it. Because of the lackadaisical attitude and the complacency of the Department of Agriculture and the veterinary service of Canada, for whatever reason they did not diagnose it as foot-and-mouth disease, nor did they diagnose it as anything else. I know for a fact farmers in that district asked the veterinaries whether this could possibly be foot-and-mouth disease, so it was talked about. In one respect I must say the minister may have been right. I have read some of the speeches made in western Canada by those who were familiar with this matter, and I know the local veterinaries generally considered that it must be only vesicular stomatitis. But when the farmers generally became inquisitive and asked for an investigation, as a national responsibility, as a national duty, as something vital to the economy of this country concerning this basic industry, surely there should have been an investigation. Surely samples should have been sent to Regina or Saskatoon or Hull to make sure that it was vesicular stomatitis rather than foot-and-mouth disease. To my mind that was a careless evasion of responsibility on the part of someone in this country which will mean a great deal as the years go by.

[Mr. Rowe.]

I do not like to stand idly by and watch this country become a secondary livestock producing country. We have the facilities for growing grain and fodder to feed great herds of livestock. We have markets, and we have developed industry in this country. We have great home markets, and there are great markets opening every year overseas to restock the herds that were depleted during the recent war. To find those markets shut off at a time when our economy is slipping, and to find that it has happened without the Department of Agriculture knowing their business or perhaps being careless in the administration of a responsibility to the economy of this country, is quite a shock.

I do not know that I can add much to this issue except to say that I well recall the surpluses of 1932. I can well recall talking in those years about the importance of the livestock industry. I recall some hon. members from western Canada saying that we would never see wheat below \$1.25 per bushel, yet I remember it selling for 40 cents and even lower in some districts. I remember when the Hawley-Smoot tariff closed our cattle from United States markets. This is the third time the United States has closed us out of their market. The great champions who sit to your right, Mr. Chairman, who were to find the United States market and hold it forever, and who thought it was so much more important than the British market, find that this is the third time the United States has closed its market to Canadian cattle.

In 1932 everyone in this house was concerned about where we would find markets. May I suggest to the Minister of Agriculture that since the United States has closed this market and with more reason than they had before, while we have complacently allowed a dangerous disease to spread through our cattle for three months until now it has spread to God knows where, at least he should take definite steps to find a market for the surplus cattle. Instead of worrying too much about what we may receive for the infected animals, we ought to find countries that have had foot-and-mouth disease to whom we could send animals under proper inspection. If we are going to be left in a position that looks dark, I suggest that the government should meet and decide whether or not it would be wise to appropriate substantial funds to get this surplus beef out of Canada, even if it has to be given away. We could make sure that none of the infected carcasses go outside the country.

I will not use the word "cowardly", but I will say that I do not think it is a very game way of dealing with an issue, to ban products