

Foot-and-mouth disease

Mr. McIvor: Mr. Chairman, since coming into this house I have not read a bill less technical and containing fewer legal expressions than this one. In fact you would think it was written by a farmer or a farmer's wife. There is only one word—"extirpate"—which some farmers might not understand; but if they did not their wives would soon tell them it is what you do with mustard that grows on your farm. You just rip it out. I think the language of this bill is very plain and simple, and I do not think we need a lot more information in order to understand it. When I think of those farmers who have lost their cattle, when I see pictures of the carcasses piled in a great hole, I do not think we should wait very long before getting the compensation to those who have suffered. I hope all the rest of the speeches from now on will be as short as mine.

Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North): This afternoon the member for Battle River said that this was not a family problem, in other words it was not one which affected Saskatchewan only but one which affected every province in this country. In my opinion it is also not a rural problem only, but one which affects every Canadian, for we may be faced with an emergency of national importance. When we consider that we have lost our market for beef in the United States, we can realize it is something which affects every one of us in one way or another. Those who are directly affected are the farmers in the area in which the quarantine has been imposed. Others affected are the grain producers, the feed producers and, of course, the tradesmen who are dependent upon them.

But there are others who are just as directly and just as adversely affected. I refer to the question which my leader, the member for Rosetown-Biggan, asked in this house on Friday. He asked if the government had arrived at any policy which they were going to pursue in regard to those packing house employees in Regina who were out of work through no fault of their own. The minister answered that it was the intention of the government to introduce legislation. I find it difficult to ascertain in what way this legislation covers those men and women who are unemployed. There are two plants in Regina that are closed, the smaller one is Intercontinental and the larger one is Burns. There are some 300 families of packing house workers who are directly and adversely affected by the discovery of foot-and-mouth disease in this country.

I agree that those farmers who have suffered ought to be given compensation, but I am prepared to argue that those workers who are

affected should also receive some compensation. I should like to know what the intentions of the government are in this respect. I believe the companies have been approached by Mr. Dowling, who is the national director of the packing house workers, to see what they were prepared to do. Not unnaturally, they are not prepared to do a great deal. Both the Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister received telegrams on Friday from Mr. F. W. Dowling, who as I say is the national director of the united packinghouse workers in Canada. The telegram reads:

Understand government has announced its intention to compensate farmers and packing companies for loss incurred in quarantine due to hoof-and-mouth disease. Please advise if similar compensation contemplated for packing plant employees for loss of employment.

I have no means of knowing whether or not that telegram has been answered, but I should like to know from the minister what the intentions of the government are towards compensating those who have lost employment through foot-and-mouth disease.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, those who have spoken so far have, for the most part, been agriculturists, and they have dealt fully with their aspect of the problem. I should like to speak now as a consumer, and as one engaged in industry, to say what I believe this gross negligence on the part of the government is going to do to the economy of this country as a whole. From the evidence that was presented this afternoon, it was obvious to anybody in this chamber that something very close to hoof-and-mouth disease was diagnosed in Saskatchewan on December 7. As was so ably pointed out by the member for Brant-Wentworth this afternoon, it could have been definitely known within six days whether that disease was or was not hoof-and-mouth disease.

It seems to me that when you are dealing with something as dangerous as hoof-and-mouth disease, the obvious thing for the members of the Department of Agriculture to do is to make a positive test to decide whether that disease is or is not hoof-and-mouth disease. Nothing was done for two and a half months. During that two and a half months, an incalculable number of carriers have been allowed to roam abroad. Many of them may easily have been shipped to other parts of this country. They may be spreading the disease at this very moment. As was pointed out by the member for Brant-Wentworth, there is no way you can tell whether or not they are spreading that disease.

The result of this delay will probably be that it will take years before the United States border is again opened to Canadian