

Supply—Agriculture

I do not know where the minister is getting his information on the marketing situation within the quarantined area and the buffer area; but as the letters coming to me point out, the market in that area is almost non-existent; and with respect to any that exists, the products must be used within that area.

I have here a letter from a young farmer at Weyburn. A few lines of it read as follows—

The Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. member should disclose the source of his quotation.

Mr. Argue: The name of the man who wrote the letter is Robert May of Weyburn. Someone says to me that I do not need to give the name. I am sure this young farmer will have no objection to having his name on the record. In this letter he had been writing about his own personal situation as a result of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. He had pointed out that he was unable to market his hogs, that his sows were farrowing and that his barn was becoming greatly overcrowded. He says this:

Along with the overcrowding of pigs, the same situation is developing in cattle. I have bulls for spring sale in late March which cannot be disposed of except within the buffer zone. My spring calf crop of ten to fifteen calves are due to start coming April 3. Here too I will be overcrowded.

To show that he for one at least does not agree with the minister that there is no difficulty in that area, he says this:

I beg of you to draw to the attention of Mr. Gardiner the complete lack of a market outlet. This is a most serious situation, and although it affects a relatively small area, it still merits an immediate remedy on the part of the authorities.

Certainly in my opinion, at least, it is incorrect to say that there is no marketing difficulty within that buffer and quarantined area. There are marketing difficulties outside that area, but the marketing difficulties within that area are much worse, because the livestock products within that area must be consumed by local people, and the market, because of that, is very limited. I know that the minister has been giving the matter of this outbreak serious consideration. I know that, because a conference of provincial ministers of agriculture has been called in Ottawa; but the Minister of Agriculture has been saying a lot of things outside of parliament that I have been attempting to get him to say in parliament, or else to deny that he has said them. In the *Leader-Post* of Monday, March 24, there is a report by the Ottawa staff correspondent which says that the possibility of fixing a floor price for livestock had not been considered by the cabinet. Two

days later in that same newspaper there is a statement that a program is being evolved. It says:

It is expected, however, that it will involve the agricultural prices support board administering the prices support board program with the agriculture products board handling the actual operation of the program.

According to the *Montreal Gazette* of Wednesday, March 26, the Minister of Agriculture said to the Kiwanis club in Ottawa that the federal plan now is under preparation for submission to the provincial representatives. The article goes on:

Mr. Gardiner said the United States embargo, resulting from the outbreak, is creating a surplus of beef in Canada, and that a price stabilization program may have to be maintained as long as the United States embargo remained in force.

Following that statement in the press, I asked the minister on Thursday, March 27, whether these statements were correct, and what the government's policy was in relation thereto. The minister replied, as reported at page 840 of *Hansard*:

What I said to the Kiwanis club in Ottawa the day before yesterday was correct; but it was not necessarily what my hon. friend says it was.

Still the minister did not tell us the government's policy. He is still leaving the agricultural producers of Canada wholly in the dark. He makes a statement that the government has a policy that is about to be brought forth, that would stabilize prices. According to the press, and according to the radio, his parliamentary assistant, the hon. member for Middlesex West, announced on Saturday that legislation covering floor prices would be published during the present week.

Well, I think it is time that the Minister of Agriculture told us in this house what the government's policy is in regard to floor prices. Either the government is going to bring in floor prices or it is not. The minister should not be making statements outside the house, as well as his parliamentary assistant, in relation to a possible program to stabilize floor prices, unless he is prepared to tell parliament whether these reports are correct, and what the floor price will be.

I for one certainly hope that there will be a floor price. For the government to bring down an estimate now of some \$500,000, or about 1/500 of the total of the supplementary estimates, is not a realistic figure, and is not a program that will deal adequately with this emergency.

I should like to inform the house of some of the statements made by responsible agricultural organizations in Canada in relation to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. The first document I should like to quote from is a pamphlet put out by the Canadian