

Agricultural Products Board

during and after the war I did not have an animal on the farm that had had more than two calves. Why? Because I think the price is going to go down some time and I do not take any chances of having any cows around that have had more than two calves, if they are of the grade variety. I have nothing but purebred Shorthorns now, and I even do not let those get beyond the age of 7 or 8. I can market them at a higher price now for beef than I was able to market them a few years ago as breeding stock. Therefore when they reach an age where they are likely to go back instead of going ahead we sell them, and surely no one is going to criticize farmers for doing that. That is good business, and if it results in our having a few less cows milking for the time being it will not take very long to pull up the few thousands indicated in the figures I gave a few moments ago. The farmers could pull that up in six months easily and be back on the same level as they were before.

But they will not do that until such time as prices are lower for beef and breeding stock than they are at the present time. I am not going to do anything as Minister of Agriculture either to lower the price of beef cattle or to lower the price of the dairy cows that they have for sale. I do not think it is up to me to do anything about that. It took me ten years of steady working after I came here, with all the co-operation I could get from anybody, to get the prices up from the low levels of the thirties to where they were by the time we got through with the war. Now that the war is over we have spent the last five years getting prices higher, by every policy we have followed, than they were even during the war. I do not know why anyone representing an agricultural constituency would criticize that. If that is called poor business for the farmers carried on by the government of this country, then I am very pleased to be associated with those who have been carrying on that kind of business.

Mr. Ferguson: Have your picture taken without the bull next time.

Mr. Gardiner: Anything that raises prices to the farmer from time to time above the level of the period prior to the war is, I think, doing a good service for this country. I did not get my hon. friend's question.

Mr. Ferguson: I suggested that you have your picture taken without the bull next time.

Mr. Wright: The minister has said that he had his picture taken with an animal that sold for \$15,000 but I think he has made more than that peddling his line. The point that

I rose to make is that the minister stated our production was fairly satisfactory and that we still had a good number of milk cows in the country. I have here a statement made by the party whom the minister quoted a short time ago, and it gives the real reason for the decrease in production. He says that the number of milk cows on Canadian farms as of June 1, 1951, reached the lowest point in twenty years, and this in face of the fact of a human population increase of two and one-third million. The minister has quoted figures indicating that we are pretty well holding our own.

Mr. Gardiner: I have the figures here if you want me to read them to you. I can prove that that statement is not quite correct.

Mr. Wright: We are doing better than holding our own so far as population is concerned but we are not doing enough in producing essential foods for that population. The production of milk has declined well over a billion pounds since the end of the war. The minister has talked for quite a while but he has not given us one thing that the government is going to do to increase the prices of dairy products to the point where farmers will believe they are getting a fair deal and will increase their production. I would like him to give us details of the policies the government are going to follow which will tend to increase production. No one wants prices to come down. Some hon. members are looking over here as though we on this side were advocating a policy which would decrease prices. We never advocated any such policy. What we ask for is a reasonable floor price under these products which will give the farmers some assurance of future markets, some assurance that they can go ahead and increase production. I would like the minister to tell us something with respect to government policy to increase production in this country.

I should like to ask a question with regard to the resolution we are now discussing. The resolution refers to a payment not to be greater than the amount by which \$15 million exceeds the balance of the agricultural products board account. I suppose that anything over that amount will be paid into the consolidated revenue fund. Is this amount expendable or is it just working capital for the board?

Mr. Gardiner: I take it that to start off with the board will draw not more than \$15 million. We can purchase whatever we are required to purchase, but having purchased a commodity we sell it. As we obtain money for it that goes back into the account. The balance over and above the amount which is being carried cannot be more than