

Mr. BLACKMORE: If the standing order prevailed at that time, surely the government would have been taking meat out of the packing plants as fast as it was brought in. The whole thing does not fit together to make sense.

Mr. GARDINER: It does to some people. It makes sense to me.

Mr. BLACKMORE: To the ordinary person it does not. The minister says that there has been a standing order to take beef, and that this has prevailed since a certain date in the fall of 1943.

Mr. GARDINER: The hon. member forgets the other part of the statement I made in answer to his question. I said that one of the reasons why there was not a surplus of beef there was the policy proposed at the meeting to which reference was made. Where you have a rising floor beginning at a low level, in September and October, and rising to a higher level in April and May and continuing through to August, while that rising process is taking place the packer does not buy any more on that step than he can sell on that step, and that was one thing that delayed the purchases of cattle, resulting from the fact that beef was not on hand in a surplus to be sold. As to the change of policy, I made a recommendation to the very people the hon. member is talking about, the people in Alberta, the suggestion being that it would help considerably to have it changed. As long as they are insisting on the policy that is being followed there will be trouble if it is maintained, but if they take the position that it should be changed from the plan set out in Calgary in 1942, there will probably be more favourable consideration given to it at this end.

Mr. BLACKMORE: The minister is not entirely logical. This order, this press release by Donald Gordon, undertakes to purchase any surplus of beef that threatens to depress the price. The very minute that the packers cease to buy, thereby causing a surplus to accumulate, threatening to depress prices, then unquestionably the Wartime Food Corporation should step into the picture to rectify the situation.

Mr. GARDINER: The order has been there all the time for any surplus of beef, and where there were surpluses they were bought. They were bought to the extent of 107,000 head of cattle, which was more than was bought previously to be sent to the United States market, and this is sent to the British market.

Mr. BLACKMORE: The important point is this. Why were not these cattle bought which were standing in the way in my con-

[Mr. Gardiner.]

stituency, occasioning such a loss? If the standing order was there, and this statement of the wartime prices and trade board has never been revoked, why was it not put into operation?

Mr. GARDINER: I can tell my hon. friend why they were not bought. I did not sell my cattle in those weeks that were referred to when the price was down. The fact that the price was at a certain level on the market does not mean that every farmer sold his cattle. Many carried their cattle through, which was the proper thing to do under the circumstances. When the market is glutted with stock, stock that you can carry over, you ought to carry over, and many farmers carried cattle to the last week in April or the first week in May or later. In fact, they are coming on to the market now in great numbers, as the figures which I read indicate.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Exactly so; but the cattle, the presence of which occasioned people concern, were ready for the market in the early days of February. The difficulty arises in the fact that this supporting purchase of live cattle did not come into operation, and when the people who are concerned tried to find out who would buy these cattle in accordance with the statement made by Donald Gordon all they got was a run-around.

Mr. GARDINER: Oh, no.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Let me give evidence to show that it is as I say.

Mr. GARDINER: The farmers all know, and they would explain it to the hon. gentleman if they were here, that the price paid for beef on the last step before they reached the top was within a quarter of a cent of the highest floor. They were all instructed to that effect and the price was paid. It was not half a cent below the high floor during the latter part of the period; it was up to within half a cent of the ceiling, which is a quarter of a cent below the highest floor; the cattle during that period did sell readily, and beef was taken off the market readily in that period and is still being taken off the market in great quantities.

Mr. BLACKMORE: The minister's statements are not in accordance with the facts as they exist in my constituency, not by any means.

Mr. GARDINER: I am talking about Canada, not the hon. member's constituency.

Mr. BLACKMORE: Just the same, I will show that this is not an area that can be ignored or neglected or kicked around or shoved about, because there was a meeting of 289 persons in Lethbridge on March 15—