

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I do not find any mention of that particular matter but as this is a general vote it is possible to use it for urgent purposes as they arise. I shall be very glad to look into the matter to see if what the hon. gentleman (Mr. Blain) refers to has been recommended, or whether it will still be required under the changed conditions to which I have referred as to the distribution of arms to the country companies.

Militia—Provisions, supplies and remounts, \$130,000.

Mr. SPROULE. I want to say a word on a subject somewhat cognate to this vote. The system which has been carried out by Major Dent heretofore in purchasing remounts has not given satisfaction, although I believe that he is now making a change which will be more likely to meet with approval than the original system. At first remounts were purchased generally through one party, and if rumour can be relied upon that party made a great deal of money and did very little work. Those who purchased horses and brought them to Toronto complain that they were obliged to sell them through Grand's old firm, which had a substantial rake off on every animal purchased. The result was that the buyer was obliged to purchase them at a very low figure, and he could not get as good a class of horses on account of the low prices. He was obliged to sell them to this firm and the firm for doing nothing at all, except perhaps supplying a suitable place for the inspection of the horses, made a substantial rake off. While the Militia Department here may have no control over the matter, yet we have always believed that if they made representations to the War Office that it would be more in their interest and in the interest of the people of Canada if a different system were adopted, that representation would be attended to. It would be a much better plan to have the horses sent to the exhibition grounds in Toronto where they could be inspected at certain dates and purchased if found suitable. In this way a better class of animals would be supplied at a lower cost to the War Department, and our farmers would get better prices. I notice of late that there is greater latitude allowed to the buyers of horses, and so far that this is an improvement. I hold that there should be the greatest freedom in this matter, and even the individual farmer should be able to send his animals to Toronto and have them examined and purchased direct from him. That system would be better for the Imperial authorities, and the farmers of Ontario would get a better price for their animals.

Mr. McGOWAN. All the horses were not bought in Toronto.

Mr. SPROULE. No, but a large number were.

Mr. BLAIN.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. As the hon. gentleman (Mr. Sproule) says: This is not our concern nor do I think it would be advisable for us to offer advice unless it were asked. When my hon. friend the Minister of Agriculture was in England last year he had an opportunity of discussing this very question with the War Office, and he and I have been trying to induce the Imperial authorities to establish regular and permanent remount stations in this country for the purchase of horses. Up to this date nothing has been done, but I hope that something may be done, in which case officers of either the Department of Agriculture or of my own department would deal directly with the people. It has been suggested that fairs might be held, not necessarily at Toronto, but at country centres once a month, to which horses might be brought, and that men should be sent out to select the horses on the spot. I hope something of that kind will grow out of the negotiations now going on.

Mr. SPROULE. That would be preferable, for this reason, that a large percentage of the horses sent to Toronto are culled out, and they have either to be put up at auction and sold at whatever they will bring, or else are left on the buyer's hands. If he sells them, he is obliged to take a lower price than the animal is worth if bought at home, besides paying the cost of sending them there.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. That is quite true, and I think the amount of money which these dealers have been credited with having made is altogether incorrect. As my hon. friend says, they have had left on their hands a large number of horses which they could not dispose of or had to sell at auction at very low figures, which has eaten up a very large part of the profit.

Mr. SPROULE. My understanding is that if a buyer consigned a number of horses to Silver and Grand of Toronto, he would only be responsible for the number selected out of that consignment and he would get something like \$5 or \$10 for each horse taken by the purchaser, but the culls would be left on his hands.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I happen to know of one case in which fully 12½ per cent of the horses consigned to the Grand firm were thrown on their hands, and they actually lost that number of horses, or had to dispose of them at very low figures.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. I may say that the officer who is here purchasing on behalf of the War Office has considerably modified the original system, and for more than a year back has been purchasing in a large number of centres. When he first began purchasing he only went to two