

Foot-and-mouth disease

Mr. Gardiner: I have had it ever since it was first reported to me by anyone that there was anyone who thought that there was foot-and-mouth disease in the district, and I am in and out of the district continually.

Mr. Charlton: May I ask the minister a question? When was that?

Mr. Gardiner: Which date?

Mr. Charlton: When you first had the information?

Mr. Gardiner: When it was 'phoned to me at Vancouver by my own staff.

Mr. Rowe: About a week ago?

Mr. Gardiner: Two weeks ago today.

Mr. Rowe: You have not been worrying very long, then.

Mr. Gardiner: Neither has anyone else been worrying very long. Other members who have spoken did not know about it either; no one had ever mentioned it to them, or they should have mentioned it to me.

I feel we are going a little bit astray at the moment in order to try to build up a case. I have no objection to members doing that, because they are within their rights. But I should like to suggest that we first get this legislation on the statute books. Let us deal with what is now before us. The other question can be considered in the committee on agriculture, and it can be much more effectively discussed by both sides when we have all the facts in front of us. I admit quite candidly, in spite of what has been said by the member for Rosetown-Biggar and the member for Lake Centre, that I have not got all the information I want to have before I start discussing the subject. I shall have to get it from my officials just as the committee on agriculture will require to get it from my officials. At the moment I cannot agree that we ought to waste time discussing that question when we are face to face with the fact that we have got foot-and-mouth disease. We ought to be attacking it, and attacking it resolutely. The quicker we get this legislation through, the quicker we will be in a position to do something.

I come now to what the legislation ought to do. The legislation which we have on the statute books provides for a payment of approximately \$40 for grade cattle, that is the maximum, and a maximum payment of \$100 for purebred cattle, in addition to the commercial value of the animal. If the animal can be sold for meat, as it is from some diseases, then all the farmer receives is \$40 for grade plus the money he receives for the

carcass sold. If it is a purebred animal he receives whatever the carcass brings plus the maximum of \$100.

About two years ago we thought that was not sufficient in certain cases. We amended the act in order to make it possible to pay the farmer the commercial value if an animal were ordered destroyed under the Animal Contagious Diseases Act. There is exactly the same argument in connection with commercial value as has been raised here this afternoon. Someone has to determine what that commercial value is, and that is determined by our people. After all, we are making the payment, so we must have something to say about how much it is going to be.

This disease is somewhat different. Under the act as we have been administering it in connection with other diseases, the only thing we do is to destroy the animal which is condemned, in part or in total, and payment is made. We do something entirely different in this case. We say that any animal that came in contact with a diseased animal must be destroyed. In other words, we say that when twenty or thirty animals have been in the same stable or the same pasture, and one of them contracts foot-and-mouth disease, the whole herd must be destroyed. I should not like to be made responsible for putting into this legislation the maximum amount that we can pay a farmer under those conditions.

This farmer who has been mentioned, Mr. Beatty, had thirty-six cattle. My understanding is a little different from the letter that was read. I understood he had thirty-six cattle, twenty-four of which were registered, and most of them were show cattle. This herd is a valuable one. Quite a number of the farmers in that area are similarly situated, and the fact of the matter is that at this time of year every one of his heifers and cows that are bred is actually worth the value of two animals. A man who has a cow and a very valuable sire, and who has bred the cow to that sire or a valuable sire owned by someone else, knows that she is carrying a calf that will probably be dropped in about a month's time. Surely no one in this house is going to say that that man is entitled only to payment for the value of the cow sold as a milk cow or sold as breeding stock. Somebody has to consider all the facts and give a decision.

I believe it will also be agreed by all members of this house that it is not proper for the members of the government to leave that responsibility entirely in the hands of a small group of people. So far as we on the government benches are concerned, we are entrusted with the taxpayers' money, and