

Animal Contagious Diseases

complete herd is depopulated and the owner's income curtailed.

I believe that the people who administer the Animal Contagious Diseases Act are among the unsung heroes of the public service in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and should be congratulated. Thanks to them, we have one of the most healthy and active livestock exporting countries in the world. They make it possible for us to trade in livestock with 120 nations around the world. They are one of the most important factors of our livestock industry. I believe this bill will strengthen the powers of the government to carry out the contagious diseases aspect of the work of the department and the new area of protection of animals in transit, as well as the other aspects of public health.

Mr. J. R. Holmes (Lambton-Kent): Mr. Speaker, I am anxious to participate in this debate on the Animal Contagious Diseases Act. The hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) indicated that Canadians have little appreciation of the bill, and I think that is quite true. If we were confronted with an epidemic of undulant fever, tuberculosis or foot and mouth disease, as in 1952, the case would be different. The bill is important, however, and deserves the attention of this House. Therefore, I am pleased to add my comments.

I was interested in the minister's opening remarks when he reviewed the history of the bill. I am sure he would want me to add one or two points to what he said. The bill was introduced in 1869, as he indicated, but I think he would like to know that was the first agricultural bill introduced in this House, and it was introduced by the Conservative government under Sir John A. Macdonald.

Mr. Whelan: With the co-operation of the opposition.

Mr. Holmes: And we are interested in co-operating with the government on this bill, which we believe is excellent in principle although we have reservations about certain aspects of it. I want to deal in a general way with the bill and then come to some of the specifics, particularly the transportation section, which is new. The bill has been introduced as a vehicle to maintain the country free of serious animal diseases and to eradicate those that can be eradicated and bring under control those that cannot be eradicated.

The minister earlier indicated some amendments to the act. These are in regard to regulations which existed in the past: they are questioned as to their validity at the present time. I think we must realize this is an important feature of the bill before us. In addition, we have a new section dealing with transportation—clauses 31 to 34. I will deal with them in more detail in a few seconds. I am concerned about the issue of regulations. I have mentioned my concern in the past. In effect, the operative part of the bill cannot be analysed by the House, nor in committee. I saw the same situation earlier this week in connection with the environmental contaminants bill and the Proprietary or Patent Medicine Act.

● (1420)

The operative parts of this particular bill cannot be analysed in detail. I agree that orders in council are important and must be introduced from time to time. In cases

where regulations are to be enacted—and I strongly suggest that the government will enact many regulations affecting the operative parts of the bill—I suggest that those regulations should be made known to members of the House so that those who are interested in and affected by the bill will be aware of the regulations when the bill is approved by the House. I suggest that a mechanism should be established to this end. This would remove some of the apprehensions of some hon. members, and some individuals who will be affected by this type of legislation. I suggest that the minister should seriously consider amending the bill in such a way as to enable people more readily to assess the impact these regulations will have on them in the future.

The hon. member for Grey-Simcoe (Mr. Mitges) spoke this morning about evidence taken before the Senate agriculture committee in connection with Bill S-2. In this regard, the presentations made by Mr. Charles Gracey of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, and Mr. C. G. Munro, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, to the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture on April 24, 1974, are germane. Mr. Gracey stated in testimony:

While we support the obvious intent of sections 31 and 32, we cannot state unconditional support for the various clauses, in ignorance of the regulations alluded to but not stated.

I think the presentations made before the Senate agricultural committee are relevant to the present debate and it will be useful to summarize and perhaps paraphrase a portion of the testimony relating particularly to sections 31 and 32. Generally, the regulations relevant to those proposed sections ought to embody two fundamental principles. First, the regulations ought to ensure the safe and humane transportation of livestock. Second, they should promote maximum efficiency and speed in livestock movement. As the minister knows, total time spent in transit has a most important bearing on the welfare of livestock, but this matter has not been defined in the act and is not defined in the bill.

I suggest that proposed new section 32 will need to be considered carefully in committee. The discussion will interest many who are following the progress of this bill. Proposed section 32(1), on page 14 of the bill, proposes regulations—

—requiring, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, the examination of animals before being loaded on board any aircraft, railway car, vehicle or vessel for transport.

This section clearly refers to the preloading examination of animals. Where there is general agreement that animals should be loaded in good condition, excessive regulations may be impractical and have an adverse effect. At present, cattle originate from more than 150 points in western Canada and there is an obvious need to clearly define the regulations and the inspection procedures contemplated by the government.

Second, to a great extent there is a built-in safeguard in the routine transportation of cattle in that livestock producers buying feeder stock in the west are very conscious of needing to load animals in safe condition. Proposed section 32(b) proposes regulations—