

perhaps the packing company, some of the retail stores, and some of the buyers in the short run who will buy at a low price and sell at a much higher one. What has happened to the price of hamburger, steak, veal, and so on? It has not come down despite the fact that the farmer is getting a low price for his commodity. Despite that, the minister has not seen fit to keep his commitment to the House and to the farmers of this country and to announce this week, as he promised, what his new program will be. I ask him: when will he make a statement? When will he provide us with the leadership that he has promised us? He led the farmers to believe in the last few months that he would provide leadership.

The price has fallen for the farmer, particularly the cow-calf operator. He is the small fellow who operates in a riding such as mine. Despite the fact that the price he is getting has fallen, the cost of producing a cow has risen drastically in the last year; in some cases it has nearly doubled. The feed cost and all input costs to producers of livestock in the country are up, Mr. Speaker.

Some agricultural economists to whom I have spoken told me that for every calf a producer is selling he has to bear a loss of about \$150. When that occurs there is no way in the world that farmers will stay in business. They will sell their herds, sell their breeding stock, and get out of business. As a result we will have a shortage of cattle in this country in the next year or two, and if the consumer thinks he is paying a high price now, let him wait a year or two by which time prices will skyrocket because of the shortage of beef.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) speaks about increasing production and increasing supply in this country. Yet we will have a shortage of supply deliberately engineered by this government because it is not doing anything to solve this problem. When there is a shortage of supply, the price goes up. It is not possible to raise cattle quickly. It is not the same as in the case of hogs or poultry.

You cannot suddenly raise cattle. It is a long-term proposition. For that reason something must be done by the government very quickly, and it must be done on the federal level because we need the type of resource that is available at the federal level. I think we must have an emergency plan at this time, a subsidy for livestock producers such as has been started in Quebec. That subsidy should cover the difference between the market price and the cost of production of livestock in the country.

● (2230)

The cost of production is feed costs and other costs, plus the farmer's input in terms of his own labour and profit. If you provide a subsidy you will have the farmers and ranchers keeping their cows over the winter, and next year we will still have the herds we have at this time. That is the only way to stop farmers from selling. If we do not do that, they will sell out by the thousands all across this country. The government must make that commitment. It must subsidize the cattle industry, particularly the small cow-calf producers.

In the long term the time has come for us to say to the cattle producers what they need are marketing boards. They need some organization and some clout in the

Slaughter of Calves

market place. They must plan their production. The beef industry is one of the few agricultural industries which does not have a marketing board. Look what has happened. This industry has been going up and down. It goes up to the peaks and down to the valleys.

When there is an oversupply prices drop, and then there is a shortage. The only one to suffer besides the producer is the consumer, who has unstable prices in the grocery store. It is time to end the fluctuation in that industry. The only way to do that is to have a marketing board in which the farmers have a voice. They will be able to bargain for their product and have stability of production.

Something else we must do is guarantee prices so that the little guy can afford to get into the cattle industry, raise calves, and stay in business without being squeezed out by the big rancher. I have no sympathy at all for the large cattle rancher in Alberta who runs his outfit like a factory or huge industry. The one I am concerned about is the small cow-calf operator. The Minister of Agriculture should be spending millions of dollars trying to save him. He should be kept in business. He should keep his calves for the winter, and keep his cows to produce next year.

What is so sad about this whole affair of seeing cattle being slaughtered or hung, and food being destroyed, is that Canada is one of four or five countries in the world that are net exporters of food. There is no reason why this country should not be producing all the food we possibly can, and exporting it through the world food bank or the United Nations as part of our foreign aid.

Millions of people are dying of starvation in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world, yet the government is not encouraging the farmers of this country to produce beef and livestock. Three years ago, when millions of people were dying of starvation, the government told the farmers to get out of the wheat business through operation LIFT. That was highly immoral.

We in this country have the capacity to produce. We should use that capacity to the fullest extent, and produce all the food we can in order to feed the hungry people of the world. The farmers of this country want to do that, and that is what the Canadian people want them to do.

A world food conference will be opening in Rome on November 5. One of the proposals that should be made by the government is that Canada will commit itself to supplying a lot of food, beef, livestock, grain and so on, to the world food bank to feed the hungry people of the world. We have not yet had a statement about that from the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen).

With the situation in this country, it is time to push for a world food bank. If we do that the farmers in this country will have a stable future, a stable income. There will be guaranteed exports for their commodity. There will not be the constant up and down in the market place that we have in the world today. However, that type of support is not coming.

The minister promised some action. In answer to questions by myself and other members of the House during the past week or so, the minister promised a new program. He has not yet come forward with that. I wonder whether he is waiting until tomorrow or next week when a bit of the heat dies down. The provinces alone cannot save the