

# Black Market in Dead Horses

**M**OST New Zealanders know what it is to flog a dead horse, but they have had little experience so far of trading in dead horses, and less still of eating them. But this is no longer the case with the people of the United Kingdom. There a dead horse is worth more than a live one, and slaughtering is going on at such a rate that the farmer, who wants to work a horse can no longer compete against the butcher who wants to sell one.

The position is so serious that it has been raised in Parliament. We quote below one of many sensational reports from recent English newspapers—a "Public Opinion" summary of a speech by H. Sutcliffe, Conservative Member of Parliament for Royton.

"SINCE January 1, 1945, we have killed in this country 162,654 horses, and that is not the total figure; that is the number for only 24 cities, boroughs and urban districts from which I have been able to obtain figures. It does not tell the whole story by any means. I propose to give a selection of instances to illustrate what I mean.

"At West Ham in 1945, 14,300 horses were slaughtered and in 1947, 19,200. For the first nine months of this year the figure is 14,239. At Acton, in 1945, the figure was 3,838; in 1947, 6,121; and, in the first nine months of 1948, 5,155. At Cambridge, in 1945, the total was 643; in 1947, 2,016; and, in the first nine months of this year, 2,728. In Rochdale, in 1945, the figure was 1,709; in 1947, 2,975; and in the first nine months of this year, 3,412.

"The public have no idea of the extent or ramifications of this trade; if they had, they would rise in their wrath and demand that action be taken to stop it. The vast majority of these horses are young ones in the prime of life, perfectly healthy and with many years of useful service before them. In fact, they represent some of the finest types of British horses of all kinds, including quite a number of prize winners at the shows, which go straight from the market to the slaughterhouse. In a number of cases they even include mares with their foals, yearlings, two-year-olds and, indeed, horses of all ages and all kinds.

"This question was really brought up by one or two farmers in my constituency who wrote to me saying that they were unable to buy horses for hay-making and their crops were being seriously prejudiced for that reason. It is an industrial district and the farms are more of the hill-top type where it is extremely hard to make ends meet. Farmers could not afford the prices asked at the auction sales.

## Some Prices

"A horse of 12cwt. live weight was fetching in the region of £50 whereas it should now be in the region of £20. It is obvious that farmers in those districts, and people requiring horses for drawing wagons, cannot afford to pay £50 for a horse when, as I say, the proper price should be in the region of £20.

"A good many resolutions have recently been sent in by some branches of the National Farmers' Union, urging that something should be done about this matter. It means that no horse is now safe in a sale.

"The agents go to every sale and literally buy up everything, judging only by what each horse will fetch for meat. They look at the horses from a butcher's angle, which is quite a new thing. The vast majority of this meat is, of course, sold in the black market—I should say 80 per cent."

Mr. Elwyn Jones (Plaistow): "Is this meat intended for human consumption? Is it used for human consumption when it comes to London?"

Mr. Sutcliffe: "The majority of it is destined for human consumption. The truth is that this trade is now in the hands of a small number of men who are making very large profits. Their names and a good many of their activities are well known to the Ministry of Food. They have their own slaughterhouses.

## Paid for in Cash

"This little band of men has a complete organisation. It is highly organised and seems to have plenty of motor transport. All transactions, of course, are in cash, no questions are asked and no records are kept. People might begin to make inconvenient inquiries if any records were kept,

and there is always the Inland Revenue in the background.

"As the Parliamentary Secretary well knows, there is a Statutory Rule and Order, No. 1862, which was brought out on November 20, 1941, and this fixes the maximum wholesale and retail prices for horseflesh and also insists on the keeping of records. Never has a Statutory Rule and Order been so openly flouted as this one has.

"The Ministry's officers, instead of watching the paltry things such as sales in shops above the maximum price, should give immediate attention to these auction sales. They should attend them and follow the horse-flesh from the hoof right to the retail shops, never letting it out of their sight.

"They will have to be determined men and they will have to have their wits about them, because these men are highly organised, and they will take some beating, particularly when one recalls that three skilled men working as a

(continued on next page)



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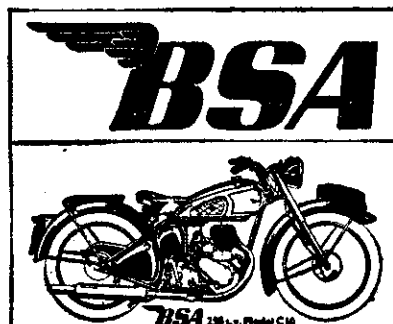
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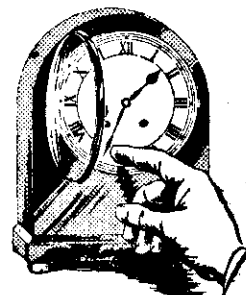
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