The Queenstown News

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Friday, December 11, 1953

The Spread Between Beef Prices

Something of a clamor has arisen concerning the spread between the price cattle sell for on the hoof and the price the housewife must pay for cuts of beef at the butcher shop. The Secretary of Agriculture has ordered an examination of the matter.

Spokesmen for the meat packers have announced that they welcome the Secretary's action. And they have good reason too—for once the facts are known, and the misinformation now current is exposed, all concerned will be better off.

An excellent explanation of the cause of the spread recently appeared in the New Ulm, Minnesota, Daily Journal, under the byline of Bob Christianson. He wrote: "Because some cattle can be bought for 10 cents a pound from the farmer and some beef sells at a buck a pound to the consumer, politicians immediately try to make a big deal of it. Sure, some beef sells at a buck a pound and some beef prices are as low as 10 cents but the two certainly aren't related.

"Only five per cent, or 50 pounds of a 1,000 pound steer, is sirloin steak, which commands the higher prices. What the politcans are doing's comparing the price paid for every pound of a cull animal on the farm with the price the housewife pays for the choicest cut of choice animals. It just isn't good reasoning.

"It all boils down to this—part of a beef animal may sell above the 50 cents per pound mark, and part of it may be selling for as little as three cents a pound. Average it all out and you'll find about a 25 cent spread between the price paid on the farm and the average price paid in the butcher shop."

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