

However, I do not have much time so I just want to underline what we do in theological education in the training of ordained ministers in our Churches. All the non-residential courses are ecumenical to some extent. Many of the theological residential colleges are ecumenical to a certain extent, and one that I know slightly better than the others is jointly Anglican- and Methodist-sponsored and has URC candidates too. However, it is no good just expecting people to learn together and to pray together during their training; they have to be enabled to be deployed together so that they can work together in ordained ministry. So I want to ask the bishops and the chairmen of Methodist districts how we can deploy people together who have learnt their ecumenical theology together. It is by getting people to be deployed together and work together in ordained ministry that we might see the further ecumenical development on the ground that Mr Griffiths is looking for.

Revd Dr Paul Avis: I have less than one minute in which to respond to Rosalind Fuller's very interesting question. (She is a member of CCU.) First of all, we must distinguish between *episcopate* and episcopacy. They are not quite the same, although they overlap. Episcopate is the New Testament Greek word for pastoral oversight and pastoral responsibility; episcopacy as we know it is one expression or form of that. Second, there is an ecumenical consensus, built up over many decades, about the nature of *episcopate* and its possible expression in episcopacy, and the essence of that is that episcopacy is seen as a sign of the unity and continuity of the Church. Finally, when the report of the formal conversations is published towards the end of the year, the extent of the agreement between the Anglican and Methodist traditions in this country will be set out. The conversations do not have to resolve this particular issue because they are only a stage, but they will point the way to the future.

The Chairman: I would like to thank the Council for Christian Unity both for its presentation and for dealing with those questions so fully.

(Adjournment)

THE CHAIR *Mrs Margaret Swinson (Liverpool)* took the Chair at 8.30 p.m.

EXTENSION OF SITTING

The Chairman: Members of the Synod will be aware that there are a large number of members wishing to speak this evening and that there are seven amendments. A warning was given earlier that a three-minute speech limit will be imposed from an early stage in order to enable as many as possible to contribute to the debate; but I would also like at this stage to extend the sitting by not more than 15 minutes in order to contribute to the time that we have available. Does that have the general consent of the Synod? *(Agreed)*

In order that as many views as possible can be heard, it is my intention, after a few speeches, to adjourn the Synod for three minutes to enable members to discuss with

one another the bishop's opening speech, their own experiences and issues raised by those who have already spoken. I hope that, in that way, people who have valuable experiences will be able to share those with other members who perhaps have not had those experiences.

Renewing Faith in the Countryside (GS 1418) Report by the Board of Mission

The Bishop of Blackburn (Rt Revd Alan Chesters): I beg to move:

'That the Synod do take note of this Report.'

As Chairman of the House of Bishops' Rural Panel, I feel very privileged to introduce this important debate on behalf of the Board of Mission. This debate is intended to mark the tenth anniversary of the publication of the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Rural Areas, *Faith in the Countryside*. That report, some may remember, offered the theological understanding, that 'The true vocation of the human person is to be the priest of creation – to stand before the creator on behalf of all creation ... and in turn to interpret the good intention of the creator to and for all', and that 'Salvation in Christ involves working for freedom and justice for others'. 'For the Church to be truly committed to enabling persons to grow will involve the task of ensuring that society is organized in such a way that human beings can enter freely into these relationships of spiritual and material exchange that we call loving relationships.'

Faith in the Countryside did not receive the publicity which surrounded *Faith in the City*, perhaps because it did not have the advantage of being rubbished by a senior Government minister, nor did it lead to the establishment of the equivalent of the Church Urban Fund, which has done so much to put fresh heart into socially deprived urban areas. However, it was judged by Lord Shuttleworth, the then Chairman of the Rural Development Commission, to be 'an excellent analysis of the rural situation'. Perhaps the somewhat matter-of-fact, downbeat way in which the report was received was symptomatic of how rural life and village churches can so easily be taken for granted – just part of the scene – and how easily we accept the commonly held but rather simplistic view that, because they look attractive and we like going there for holiday or retirement, all is well in rural England and in agriculture, which provides its background and context.

Of course such a picture is far from reality and was so, long before *Faith in the Countryside* was published. The challenges facing rural communities are long-standing as agriculture based on the overriding need for food production has become more difficult to sustain, as what many would regard as essential services have been withdrawn from our rural communities with consequential social exclusion for more people than we care to admit, and as finance and stipendiary clergy to support the rural churches have not been forthcoming. Most of the concerns highlighted in the report of ACORA have been more than justified by events and, as we shall no doubt

hear in our debate, have been proved beyond question by the recent foot and mouth epidemic.

Many of our planned ACORA celebrations had to be cancelled as a result of that epidemic but, paradoxically, much of what we had hoped to gain by way of publicity for our concern for rural communities has been shown much more dramatically by the publicity which has surrounded the foot and mouth disease, coming as it did after BSE, swine fever, serious floods and the steep decline in the price of agricultural produce across the board. As a member of the Government's rural task force, together with our Rural Officer Jeremy Martineau, representing as we do the House of Bishops' Rural Panel, I know first-hand in statistical terms the cost of foot and mouth, not only to farming but to tourism and many other rural businesses and communities. As a diocesan bishop in an area where some of the first outbreaks occurred, and whose home looks out towards the so-called Settle-Clitheroe triangle where most of the latest cases have been confirmed, I am acutely aware of the human cost to families and individuals of the isolation, fear and total disillusionment felt by so many people.

In a debate like this it will be easy to target the Government. Undoubtedly mistakes were made, as they were by the previous administration when BSE struck. I am personally aware of the concern of ministers to provide help, but procedures have been too slow, the red tape seemingly excessive, not least at regional level, with uncertainty rife among rural communities. In the circumstances, it is regrettable that the recent Queen's Speech contained no reference to rural life, other than hunting with dogs. Personally, I believe that the Government must set up some inquiry into the cause of the recent foot and mouth outbreak, why it took so long to contain it, and all the related issues. However, let no one in this Synod think that there are simple solutions to what has been and is a very complex situation.

Our motion calls for a thorough consultation initiated by the Government on the future priorities and role of agriculture. We cannot continue with a system which produces more food than people are prepared to buy. There is some hypocrisy in a society which rightly demands high standards of animal welfare and food hygiene and then refuses to pay the price that costs, and chooses to eat imported food from goodness-knows-where. The Countryside Commission and, more recently, the Countryside Agency, on whose boards I was privileged to serve, have worked hard to promote agri-environmental schemes to conserve and protect the landscape and yet sustain a living countryside.

The culture has to change. A means has to be found to help some farmers accept that change and others, especially tenant farmers, to be able to retire with dignity and security. We must hope that the reorganization of the Government departments and the creation of DEFRA will provide an opportunity for a much-needed fresh start.

In passing, let me say how much I hope that church members will find a way to play

an active role on the recently created rural sounding boards. In my view and experience it is often at regional level that the Churches are weakest in getting their voice heard.

One hundred of the 148 recommendations in *Faith in the Countryside* were directed towards the Church and our commitment to its mission and ministry in rural areas. We must not allow the foot and mouth epidemic totally to dominate the debate this evening. The issues are far more wide-ranging than that. However, the recent crisis has shown that the rural Church is very much alive. The National Farmers' Union, at national, regional and local level, has repeatedly paid tribute, and I echo that tribute, to our specialist diocesan agricultural and rural officers, to Jeremy and his colleagues at the Arthur Rank Centre – and I am delighted that Gordon Gatward, the director of that centre and the chair of the ARC Addington Fund, and his colleague Jenny Carpenter, the Methodist and United Reformed National Rural Officer, are present in the gallery. With them, we pay tribute to the parochial clergy and hosts of lay people for the pastoral care they have given. It has been a demanding ministry, being alongside people whose hopes have been dashed as their animals have been culled or their business faced an impossible cash-flow problem.

Christians are to the fore in bodies like Farm Crisis Network and the Rural Stress Information Network. Pastoral support has been backed up in a practical way by the much-affirmed initiative taken by the Archbishop of Canterbury through the Addington Fund, making grants to farmers when they had nowhere else to turn, for example, to pay the animal feed bill.

About £8 million has been raised by the fund, almost £1 million from Church collections and bodies, and the Government has matched the money raised. I am told that there is approximately £1 million still left in the fund. It has shown that the Church remains, whether people recognize it or not, at the heart of rural life. In partnership with other Churches, we must surely renew our commitment tonight to helping that continue to be the case.

Introducing *Faith in the Countryside* into this Synod in November 1990, Archbishop Runcie said, 'The small rural Church is not a failed large urban Church; it has its own potential and opportunities for imaginative worship and ministry, sometimes in ways which could never be fulfilled in the towns.' I believe very firmly that continues to be the case.

We made that point to the Government as the Rural White Paper *Our Countryside – the Future* was being prepared. Yes, we made the point, and the Government accepted that point and, for a community whose faith is based on the Lord's resurrection, regeneration is very much at the heart of our concern. The key question we must face is, are we ready to commit the resources – vision, time, energy and, yes, money – which partnership in that regeneration process will demand? We probably have more community buildings in the countryside – churches, halls, schools, et cetera – than any

other body. No wonder the White Paper sees churches as both attracting visitors worldwide and as vital bases for community services.

The £7.5 million initiative *Rural Churches in Community Service*, which received £2.5 million Lottery funding, proved what we can do. According to recent research from the University of Salford published last week, almost 25 per cent of people in rural areas live on or below the poverty line. Many are experiencing severe social and financial exclusion as vital services and public transport disappear.

What we need is an affirmation of the changing culture, in which our rural congregations are ready to see their church buildings adapted in a sensitive way for appropriate community use. Our latest estimate is that about 50 per cent of churches in rural communities with a population of under 3,000 are now being used in this way. We must persuade the Government and the Countryside Agency that, for such projects to happen, we do need an injection of capital to enable such work to be done on our buildings. With such help, the Churches could make a substantial difference when it comes to addressing social exclusion in rural areas – as we have in urban areas.

Thirty-eight diocesan bishops kindly responded to the request of the rural bishops' panel for an update on how dioceses had taken forward the ACORA recommendations. These have been collected into the report *Celebrating the Rural Church* which, on the whole, makes encouraging reading. Paragraphs 16–24 of the report GS 1418 set out the basic details of that. In times of financial constraint sector ministers can be an easy target for diocesan budgets, or the cutting thereof; but how much we have appreciated our national and diocesan rural officers in the last few months!

Faith in the Countryside pointed the way and, modestly, it is true, in some dioceses, dioceses set out on the road of taking rural areas more seriously. Again, the rural Church, considered sleepy by the unobservant, has for many years been setting the pace for pastoral reorganization, new forms of ministry, ordained and lay. Yes, some still hanker after the notion of the old – not so much the old but just the parson in his parish – model, 'Provided, Bishop, you will send us the right person.' The fact that the bishop has singularly managed not to do that for 100 years does not seem to have caught on!

In fact, instead of our rural parishes struggling on, as they did, with clergy looking for light duty, through age or illness or, to be frank, through the desire to have a leisurely life, new patterns of ministry and groupings of parishes have seen new life, imaginative worship, outreach into the community, which has regenerated the Church and the village in the countryside, often in partnership with other Churches and other voluntary and statutory bodies. I want to commend the rural Church for what it has done in the last ten years.

We have some way to go, of course, and I smiled to myself when I saw the White

Paper suggest rural regeneration based on the market towns for, in my experience, not only is the Church at its most vibrant in many of our market towns, but we have been regenerating rural Church life for years by adopting the so-called minster model, which is based on the market town.

Members of Synod will find much of what I have been talking about illustrated in the exhibition in Langwith College. The current issue of *Country Way*, which suggests ways in which the Church is or should respond to the Rural White Paper, has been sent free to every rural parish. I am very grateful to the Countryside Agency for underwriting the cost. It is easy to take these things for granted, but it is a great gesture by that body – the key body for rural England – that they have enabled that to happen.

It is a challenge to every rural parish and almost every diocese to review the contribution it can make to rural regeneration and the sharing of the good news in Jesus Christ. The bishops in the House of Lords have done much to highlight the crisis which faces many rural communities and businesses, but in my view a key contribution that the Church can and must make is in working for greater understanding and mutual support between urban, suburban and rural people. Our dioceses straddle such areas. We try to work together and we support one another as part of our daily life.

We are one nation, but there is a desperate need to prevent people dividing this country into urban and rural problems. Those who live in the countryside face real issues, but they also need to listen to what it is, in addition to food production, which urban people want of the rural countryside. Urban dwellers, who are the vast majority, need to be conscious of the fragility of much rural life and to understand that our glorious English countryside did not and does not just happen. The land has to be managed or it becomes wilderness.

As part (e) of the motion suggests, the Church is strategically placed to get that interdependence between communities on the agenda. I very much hope that this debate will help that process and so further the kingdom of God.

The Chairman imposed a speech limit of five minutes.

Mr Dudley Coates (Ecumenical Representative): First, I would like to share something of the very similar debate that we had in the Methodist Conference ten days ago, and then I hope to say something from my own personal knowledge and experience.

In the Methodist Conference we not only had a debate but we also spent a morning going out, visiting churches and farms. I do not know whether that is something that this Synod could think about doing, but I think that it was important in picking up one of the points which the Bishop of Blackburn has just made, in terms of bringing rural and urban people together. Our group went to a rural church where a number of the urban members of the Conference were able to meet people in a particular community. One of the things they learned, for example, was about the very strong community

role that the Methodist congregation has in that particular village. It is often true of rural churches of all denominations that the people in the church have a strong role in the community, which is not always true in some urban and suburban areas.

It is also the case that rural churches in our system can be poor relations of the urban and suburban churches in a circuit. I suspect that in your system they can sometimes be poor relations within a deanery, even perhaps within a group. We sometimes shuffle the small rural churches from one minister's pastoral charge to another, and I suspect that you may sometimes risk doing the same in teams and groups. That needs to be watched.

The point was very strongly made in our Methodist debate that, just as Government policies need rural-proofing, as the White Paper to which the Bishop has referred says, so do Church policies.

We also heard a good deal about the current long-standing crisis, and I will just share with you one thing from that. We heard a moving story from a naval chaplain of the effect on the ratings with whom he was working, as they had gone out to help with the slaughter process and as they saw how farmers cared for the animals that they were about to shoot.

That is from the Methodist Conference, but I have another reason for speaking. Until three months ago, I was a senior official at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and, for the last five years, I was head of the environment group there. For at least the last ten years I have been an observer, so to speak, from the inside of the blame culture in our society, because that department was vilified frequently in the press. It is only since I left that I have understood how much that affected me personally, spiritually and emotionally, and how much it sapped my morale and that of my colleagues. One of the things that was not widely reported in the BSE inquiry report was that my colleagues who were caught up in that inquiry were, on the whole, commended for having done their best in difficult and complex circumstances. That is not widely reported, which is perhaps a pity.

There is a danger in all this, it seems to me, of missing the complexity; of blaming someone – farmers, supermarkets, global capitalism – or something else, but not ourselves. A second danger is to assume that it is possible to do things that have zero risk. I listened carefully to the globalization debate yesterday. I am all in favour of the precautionary principle, if it is properly understood; but it is too often adduced to resist all innovation. Some of the arguments we hear now would have prevented vaccination 180 years ago, or the introduction of the internal combustion engine. We need, as David Gosling's paper mentioned, to take the science seriously, and I plead for proper risk assessment in areas like pesticides, GM crops, and so on.

Finally, a well-known Oxfordshire dairy farmer who is an old friend of ours called to see us last week. He has had a long-standing reputation for farming in an

environmentally friendly way, but one of the things he said was that he expected the long-term effect of FMD to reinforce the long-term trend towards fewer, larger farms, and he is himself putting his money where his mouth is and investing to expand. It is very easy to have a rose-tinted view of the sort of traditional farm that you might see on a picture postcard, but farmers will continue to be influenced by what you and I do as consumers and as taxpayers. If we want an attractive countryside, we have to pay for it – either through our food or as taxpayers.

The Chairman imposed a speech limit of three minutes.

Mrs Diana Taylor (Bath and Wells): On 20 February I was leaving the diocesan office when I heard the news of a foot and mouth outbreak. I drove home across the Somerset Levels, shaking with fear, as I had worked for MAFF during the 1967 outbreak and knew the possible consequences for the whole country. For us farmers, life will never be the same again.

I have spoken to Synod about rural matters on numerous occasions, and have a deep anxiety about being known as ‘that whingeing farmer from Bath and Wells’; but throughout the last, long 20 weeks my family has been supported by the love and prayers of many in this hall, and we will never forget that kindness. Our cows are alive, our heifers are on the edge of a village already taken out.

In return, I have worked throughout as a voluntary third-party referee for the Addington Fund, obtaining information down the telephone from applicants about their family and financial commitments, making an assessment of their needs. I then fax this to the trustees at the Arthur Rank Centre, who make the decision about a grant and get a cheque out as quickly as possible. From the moment of His Grace’s suggestion of a fund, rarely can any charitable giving have been distributed so quickly and so simply to the points of need. If pride is a sin, Your Graces, then I am guilty because I have been proud of the responses of the Church in this horrible, horrible time, and I thank you all.

We are now in week 20 and the need for financial and emotional support is greater than ever. Like you, we are all sick and tired of the struggle. The coming winter will be the crunch for thousands of us. I want to stress that I include tourism, markets, shows, manufacturers, makers of hot air balloons, everything. The Arthur Rank Centre has been co-ordinating monies given for this very wide range of affected people. Obviously, however, it has been the plight of the animals which has touched the nation. To applicants who have had them slaughtered, a one-off grant has been given to see them through the four to seven weeks before the taxable compensation, and much of the money has been given to avoid hideous animal welfare difficulties.

I quickly learned to allow an hour per phone call. It was impossible to do it any more quickly. Women often answer the phone and more and more are saying that they cannot take much more. Many say to me, ‘I never thought I would have to accept

charity.' I say, 'It has been given with love. So please accept this gift from us.' Time after time I hear them say that they will have no income until the autumn or next spring. The level of indebtedness to banks, landlords and creditors is beyond belief. The Arthur Rank Centre now has unique evidence which no one can ignore and, each time I come off the phone, I say, 'God bless you.' What else can I say?

Revd Tim Newcombe (Truro): I welcome this report. I come from a rural maritime county, over which poets, historians and novelists have cast a romantic glow; but I also come from a county and diocese where there lies hidden real, hard-core poverty. It is about this that I want to speak.

Cornwall might better be called the inner city by the sea. Poverty such as Cornwall's can be concealed in the relative affluence of the rest of the western region, which is always east of the Tamar. In Cornwall the average income is only 60 per cent of that to be found elsewhere in the country. The county has been awarded Objective 1 status by the EU. The indices of deprivation reveal the figures of all 8,000 council wards in England, but all the Cornish wards are to be found in the bottom 20 per cent and many of the urban and rural wards are in the bottom 10 per cent.

Though poor, this area of the country raised its share of funding for the *Faith in the City* initiative. However, the urban deprivation to be found in places like Penzance, Hayle, Redruth, Camborne, Falmouth, St Austell, Liskeard, Saltash and Launceston has only rarely been deemed worthy of a small grant – for everywhere has been deemed 'rural' and therefore not appropriate. We have no links with areas of affluence, for on three sides we are surrounded by the sea and, on the fourth, we are hemmed in by a river. Our children and young people have fewer opportunities for higher education and, unless they wish to study fine art, none in the county.

Such has been the decline in all industries, including agriculture, now overtaken by foot and mouth, thankfully with only four cases in our county. When the patriarch of the socialist republic of South Yorkshire, the Bishop of Sheffield, came to talk to the clergy, he jokingly reminded us that when he got home he could say, 'It was nice to visit the poor relations'!

Cornish Christians are not without hope, however, for the domes of the Eden Project are full of people, and the Tate Modern at St Ives has been receiving visitors for many years. The Church is looked to more for its ministry now than ever before, whether they be chapel folk, visitors or non-churchgoing people. Ecumenically things are moving forward, and we are by no means an area for traditionalist, backward-looking people.

Faith in the City shocked and provoked a response. *Faith in the Countryside* did not. As we say in the country, 'Fine words, my 'andsome, butter no parsnips'. In welcoming this report, I hope that the Synod will indeed renew its faith in the countryside, resource that work of the Church and discriminate positively in favour of the

countryside, so that the imaginative and creative strategies being developed there can be strengthened and enhanced, not hobbled or killed off.

Mr Martin Dales (York): We have heard about the sadness of the cricket today. Normally when we think of someone getting a century, we think of success. The sad news in North Yorkshire, in the area in which we are meeting today, is that a century has been reached as of tonight, with 101 cases of foot and mouth and two more today: one a mere half-an-hour away from here and another up on the North York Moors. Those who know those areas and have enjoyed holidaying in them will know that the effects for people on each edge of the moor are, to put it mildly, quite significant.

One of the things that I wanted to raise here was the fact that there seems to be a huge lack of publicity regarding what is actually going on. MAFF, or whatever they have renamed themselves, seem not to be very keen to let us know, and the newspapers seem to have forgotten. Here in this area, however – and this is not the only one – it is still on the way up. It is marvellous to hear of all the money being raised, and so on, but for me the key thing has been the need for more prayer as well as the money, because people are going through some fairly horrendous experiences.

The other aspect is the involvement of the Churches ecumenically. This may be a great opportunity to look at the way in which we work with other Churches. In the rural areas around here there is a great deal of working together. That is something we should bear in mind when considering some of the amendments, in particular the one which relates to supporting a working party.

It is good to hear that there seems to be money available in certain quarters. Hopefully, money can be made available to help push hard for all those people who are suffering at this particular time. It is right on our doorstep. Sadly, I do not think that they would appreciate visitors, but we can remember them in our prayers.

The Chairman: Under SO 14G, I now propose to adjourn the Synod for three minutes, during which time members can engage in some of the urban and rural meeting-together which Mr Coates mentioned, sharing experiences and discussing what has been said so far.

The Session was adjourned for three minutes.

Revd Clive Mansell (Ripon and Leeds): I am speaking to Item 40 on the order paper. The amendment praises the prompt and speedy work of the Addington Fund and various other bodies, in meeting needs amongst those hit by the foot and mouth crisis, and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to respond with much greater urgency and in much greater measure to the financial problems found amongst many in rural areas. It is an attempt to highlight ongoing needs and problems which Government can help to address and which need addressing with speed and efficiency.

Let me set what I say in a personal context. I am a country rector of 4 churches and 17 villages in North Yorkshire. We have not had an FMD outbreak in our parish, happily, but we have been affected by nearby outbreaks in every sort of way. Across the recent months we have lived with the fear of these day by day. We have had the restrictions on us and we have had the impact on fundraising for the parish. I am also area dean for Wensleydale – that beautiful area familiar to many from the James Herriot vet stories, and to others by virtue of the place where they make Wallace and Gromit's favourite cheese. Wensleydale suffered foot and mouth outbreaks in the first weeks of the crisis. We had them again at Easter-time and again in the last few days. On Wednesday I drove up the dale. On the last 20 miles of my journey to Hawes at the top of the dale I only saw perhaps 20 fields with any animals at all. An empty and silent landscape. Many of the cash tills too are relatively silent and empty, as the effects of the crisis hit the tourism trade, the bed and breakfast trade, the gift trade and all sorts of trades. Two weeks ago the local newspaper reported that businesses had had a downturn of 40 per cent in their takings; that unemployment had risen by over 27 per cent. In Devon the story is the same. The impact is hitting all sorts of activities, from hot air balloons which are now grounded, to marquee provision, the gift shops, the restaurants – where people will not eat in case they catch foot and mouth disease from the food of the countryside.

Business is being slowly, or quickly, strangled. The Government has taken various steps to assist, including funding through the regional development agencies, but this money is relatively modest, set in the context of the total amounts. In Devon 19,000 businesses are seriously affected. The estimate by Exeter University is that the economy there will lose between £450 million and £1 billion this year. The Government grant of £6 million has gone in tranches of £15,000 to 760 businesses. North Yorkshire will get £2.6 million. We need much more; we hope that will be a first tranche. In Cumbria, which has had 42 per cent of the FMD outbreaks, they too have had £6 million. 'A minute amount', says one senior figure there to me.

In contrast, RABI and the Addington Fund have already provided £2 million in grants to 2,000 farms in Cumbria. What about the multitude of businesses which will not get farm-based grants, which do not qualify for RABI? What about the many people made unemployed? In Devon, 14,000 have been laid off; 2,400 have been made redundant. In Wensleydale earlier this year 10 people lost full-time jobs, 64 people lost part-time jobs and, at the same time, 60 self-employed people lost 70 per cent of their income. Businesses, job losses, unemployment. Local authorities have their cash problems. They have business rate relief provisions, but the Government will not be repaying that in full. They will also need help.

Very briefly, can we take the example of the voluntary agencies which have been so prompt in meeting needs, and can Government be encouraged by that?

Mr Roy Thompson (York): In St Paul's email to Timothy, 'Get out the green wellies: you're off to the country'! All we need to know now is what sort of Church is viable in

the future in rural areas, and we need to know that soon. We need to go out, to ask and to listen. I am proposing a small task force to find out what the rural areas need, not how little we can give them.

It is not good enough to say, renew the 'commitment to its mission and ministry in rural areas', et cetera. If the commitment is weak, to renew it is hardly progress. If my cause is accepted, we have added one tooth to a toothless motion. With one tooth we can bite.

This small task force would be commissioned by the Archbishops, would visit every diocese with significant rural areas and would discuss, with all the Churches and agencies, environmental issues, finance, demography and the changing pattern of life in the countryside. It could come back and possibly ask us to think the unthinkable. It could tell us if the cause is lost, or it could tell us that all is well. At any rate, it would be an objective report from rural life on how the future is to be met, not a renewal of the status quo. It would take due account of the issues raised in the Government's Rural White Paper.

Why might such a task force be appropriate? Following the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and debate, CMEAC was commissioned to visit dioceses to monitor how they were responding. I was involved in a recent visit to the York Diocese and we learned a great deal in the preparation for this audit, this Ofsted-style visit. We had failed to see the problems around us and the Archbishop of York made a final request that their report should be hard-hitting and pull no punches. CMEAC carry out these audits on your behalf. They might suggest centres of excellence in larger villages and towns. They might encourage the use of lay ministry in a fully structured way.

We have here an opportunity to get to grips with a difficult problem. The cost of the task force would probably be less than the cost of one visit by the Prince of Wales to an agricultural show by royal train. It has to be small, however, and, as indicated in the Exocet that has been issued with the papers, about £45,000. This is very small beer, in terms of the total relationship of cost in getting to grips with the rural Church.

We have an opportunity to get on with it. I suggest that you vote for my amendment. You can go home to your wives and lovers and say, 'We did something radical this weekend. We voted for a tooth.'

Mrs Viviane Hall (Oxford): A farmer in our Diocese of Oxford has said *Faith in the Countryside* was the finest textbook on the rural scene which has ever been published. This debate rightly celebrates the tenth anniversary of that report.

I come from a deanery with a market town, many villages and farms. My amendment arose from our last deanery synod meeting. We had invited our rural officer to stir us up for Rogationtide, long before the foot and mouth crisis, but expecting the Rural White Paper. His presentation therefore proved highly topical, very informative and,

at times, disturbing. Members were so concerned at the rumours of UK armed forces being supplied with imported rather than British meat that a motion was carried, asking for these reports to be investigated with a view to reversing this policy. This led me to do some research on the subject. Despite media reports to the contrary, a Ministry of Defence press release states that 100 per cent of pork supplied to the armed forces is British; since 1998, 100 per cent of beef has also been British-sourced but, with intervention stocks from the EC running out, this may not be able to continue. They have been unable to source British lamb competitively. Their contractors are required, 'to give full consideration to British products and to buy them wherever they are competitive.'

As so often happens, money is the bottom line, even at the risk of threats to health and livelihoods. Surely we should all support our own producers by buying locally rather than paying them not to produce or subsidizing them? The NFU is working on and with the MoD to improve the amount of British-sourced food. The MoD is only one official meat procurer. What about schools and hospitals?

Buying British meat is not only good for farmers, it keeps the English countryside green and pleasant for us and for our visitors. It cuts down on food miles. Our local food directory points out that the foot and mouth crisis has highlighted the consequences of globalization and intensive farming methods, and the urgent need to develop sustainable, locally based food production and consumption. Some farmers, it says, have been saved from bankruptcy by selling their produce locally through farmers' markets. *Country Way* describes what the Exeter Diocese has done to encourage the use of local food for schools and Church events. The purchasing choices we all make play their part.

A final quote from our rural officer: 'The Church can do a great deal to help support farmers and their families. We need our congregations to be well-informed. We need to be proactive. We need to buy British and to buy local.'

Canon Paul Brett (Chelmsford): I want to suggest that we are not casting our net wide enough in this motion and in most of the amendments. It is the countryside as a whole that we need to think about, not just agriculture and the Church. The report itself in paragraph 10 points to 'the need for a national debate on the long-term future of the countryside and its people'. This is surely more than just a question about agriculture.

Let me give some brief examples of what I mean. First of all, the rural economy. Mr Mansell has dealt adequately with that, and I shall not add anything to that point. Secondly, the landscape. Even though the countryside looks the way it does substantially because of the work of farmers, it does not belong to farmers; it belongs to all of us and we all have an interest in its future.

Thirdly, Europe. An industry that is moulded almost wholly by subsidies and grants instead of by need and demand cannot be healthy, and yet this is what we have done to

it on an international level. It is not simply a problem about 'the future priorities and role of agriculture in the United Kingdom', as the motion says.

Fourthly, the natural environment. We share the land with the rest of creation – with nature, with animals, with the ecosystem – yet we sometimes treat it as if it were wholly ours to exploit for our own benefit. We need a wider moral canvas on which to paint our ideas about the future.

Fifthly, social change. Much is made of the alleged divide between urban and rural and the lack of understanding between them; yet social change has always brought people from one part of the country to another. This is the story of much of Essex, where I live. More than 100 years ago, for example, with the repeal of the Corn Laws and several disastrous harvests, many Essex farmers went bankrupt, left agriculture altogether, went to the towns or emigrated. Local landlords advertised – yes, advertised in the press – for people to come down from Scotland and elsewhere to take on our derelict farms, and several hundreds of families did so. There is a Scottish family in my parish who responded to just that appeal in the 1880s, and they are still with us. This sort of thing is social change on a large scale, and we need to think carefully how to manage it.

All this is part of the debate that needs to take place. My amendment seeks to enable this and, when the time comes, I would want to encourage the Synod to vote for it.

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): I come to this debate both in the capacity of having ministered for over 42 years in the countryside and now as a councillor in the third largest district council in the country in terms of geographic size. I think that it is important to try to sharpen up the motions before us because, whilst one welcomes the sentiments that have been expressed, they will remain sentiments unless at grass-roots level we begin to follow the example of others as to how we should work in future and how deeply we all empty our pockets.

We must be prepared to adjust our traditions and modes of practice in order to meet the challenges that face us. Most of the major changes are there for the grasping, if we have the nerve and the imagination to seize them. Many of them are to be found in the report in front of us.

Opportunity hath only a forelock and is bald on the hinder part.
When she hath passed you by, you cannot snatch her back.

Parishioners must adapt to receiving pastoral care and leadership in worship from not only those ordained but all who receive the bishop's licence. Indeed, the clergy's role in the future must be concentrated on teaching and building up the core body of believers in their care, so that they in turn can minister to the broader congregation. We must have more youth leaders in our deaneries, who can work alongside the

secondary schools and in the villages. The county councils and district councils are ready to work in partnership. The door is swinging open.

Our church buildings are often the only public building now left in the smaller villages, apart from woefully inadequate village halls. Let us be willing to take the pews out and replace them with chairs, if necessary, so that the building can be used for a variety of purposes. (*Applause*) Do not clap; I must get on. I do dislike the haste in a debate like this. It is so important, but everyone is feeling pushed – and I hope that the Business Committee will look at this.

Let us invite our Christian brethren from other denominations to use our churches. We need to open discussions with county and district councils on partnerships involving affordable housing and youth work. I hope that we are already getting involved in the area liaison committees we have been setting up.

It will mean that bodies like DACs, English Heritage, the Georgian Group and the Victorian Society being much more flexible in the future. It will mean churchwardens and PCCs being willing to change long-held positions, both as to where they sit in worship and what they sit on. It will mean retaining housing for musicians, for administrative assistants and for youth leaders, instead of selling it off to the highest bidder.

These proposals will not require extra resources from the centre or the diocesan level, but it will require the Board of Mission to send the authority of the whole Church down to our PCCs, churchwardens and deaneries, to get them to initiate action now along the lines this debate has developed. Let us show that we mean business tonight; that we are not content to retrench but, instead, become once again a force for change and challenge in the countryside. I am excited by the countryside. I believe that we have a great future there in the Church, and we will take the lead.

Revd Richard Thomas (Oxford): None of us here tonight will be unaware of the huge debt of gratitude that we owe both from the Church, and indeed as part of the nation, to the Arthur Rank Centre, and to Jeremy Martineau and his ecumenical colleagues.

It may therefore be symbolic of the kind of way in which they operate – very much in the background, not looking for glory or for praise, and with a very small staff – that when we come to the motion we see them tucked away, almost as a kind of afterthought: ‘That this Synod ... encourage the dissemination of, discussion and appropriate action on the ideas in the spring/summer issue of *Country Way* and support for the work of the Arthur Rank Centre ...’. My amendment is equally symbolic. I want to take that phrase, ‘of the Arthur Rank Centre’, and make it a subclause in its own right, in order to do two things. First, to make visible our enormous debt of gratitude to those people. Second, to put on record the fact that we need to go on supporting them.

When the ARC Addington Fund was first announced, as the communicator for the Oxford Diocese I went to see whether there was anything that our diocese and its communication team could do to support them. What I found was a minute team: a David taking on the Goliath of the nation's media and the nation's concern. I asked myself the question whether there was any way in which we as a Church could be slightly more flexible in offering staff at a time of crisis. If in another part of the Church's life we meet a similar crisis, I hope that we can be slightly more flexible in seconding more staff to a very small and overstretched unit.

My amendment is a small and symbolic act. It is designed simply to say a very big thank you to that small group of people, and to encourage us not to let them lurk in the background but to bring them forward for future support.

Mr Nigel Holmes (Carlisle): Ten days ago the new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Margaret Beckett, encountered some hostile Commons questioning, not only from the Opposition, who are calling for a public inquiry, but also from Derek Foster, Labour Member of Parliament for Bishop Auckland, who said, 'As someone who has 44 cases of foot and mouth – a disastrous time for the whole of Teesdale – may I add my voice to those calling for a public inquiry.' He has 44 cases in his constituency; in my General Synod constituency, Cumbria, we have had more than 775 out of a British total of more than 1,800: in other words almost half.

What, you may wonder, is the particular reason for calling for a thorough and formal public inquiry? After that Commons exchange, during which Margaret Beckett would not accede to the public inquiry, I rang her department about the alternatives. From the deputy chief librarian there it seems that there are two principal choices, and the difference is very significant. For a public inquiry, an external chairman has to be appointed, usually a judge or a retired judge; the proceedings are held, as the name implies, in public and are reported in the media throughout; witnesses can be compelled to appear and a formal and full report is produced. In contrast, the alternative internal inquiry has a chairman from within the initiating department and there is no compulsion to hold hearings in public or, for that matter, to publish a report, even though a report is almost always forthcoming. So if you have something to hide, then the internal inquiry is the means to conceal.

Any who heard the Channel 4 programme last Tuesday would realize that there are some very big questions to be answered. Indeed, one of the critics in that programme was no less a person than the Government's own chief scientific adviser. Sadly, I have no time to go into the detail and to tell you more, except to quote some statistics. Already that other pillar of the Cumbrian economy, tourism, has lost a huge amount of money – somewhere between 70 and 80 per cent. The national loss is already £2.5 million, and likely to be £5 million by the end of the year. There does therefore need to be a wide-ranging, powerful and public inquiry. This is the worst outbreak of foot and mouth the world has seen.

The Liberal Democrat spokesman, speaking in that Commons debate, said, 'It is quite clear to everyone that the scale demands a full, public, open and independent inquiry.' A member of this Synod from Devon told me yesterday that the *Western Daily News* is running a campaign to that effect at the moment. An inquiry like this need not take years. Cost should not be the determining factor. This Synod needs to be sending to Government a clear signal that the truth must be revealed. Lessons do need to be learned. There have been public inquiries into many lesser matters. This is nothing short of a catastrophe for Cumbria and a calamity for the country.

Revd Dr Judy Hunt (Chester): I speak tonight as a rural parish priest and as a qualified veterinary surgeon, though not, I hasten to add, as a member of the cast of *The Archers*!

As a rural parish priest I am well aware of the pressures on the farming community and would echo the words of many previous speakers about the pain, despair and anger felt. However, especially with a veterinary background, I cannot stop there. The report which we are looking at tonight ends paragraph 3 with these words about the foot and mouth outbreak: 'local churches and Christians were able to mount a human response to the human tragedy of a seriously damaged rural economy.' So far, so good. Let us not stop there, however, for elsewhere the report does widen its focus from a solely anthropocentric concern. Paragraph 10 notes 'the need for a national debate on the long-term future of the countryside and its people'. Hopefully that does include its livestock, especially as paragraph 28 notes a previous concern for animal welfare.

Paragraph 41 encourages the playing of 'a full part including a confident sharing of theological perspectives' in the debate about the kind of agriculture we want. Paragraph 49 reminds us that ethical and spiritual values must illuminate all discussion about such matters as 'the length of the food chain'.

Although I support Item 44 about a public inquiry, for the sake of openness, of learning, of justice, my support is coupled with a conviction that the findings of such an inquiry will be challenging: challenging not only to the Government and its officials but also to some well-established farming and marketing practices.

The spread of the foot and mouth virus to and through different areas of the country has highlighted the amazingly large amount of live animal transportation and has brought a greater awareness of the role of markets and abattoirs in addition to that of supermarkets. Any inquiry, whether fully public or not, is likely to question some previously accepted practices. I hope that at the appropriate time this Synod will be prepared to take such findings seriously, as well as the other findings that we might more readily welcome.

It will not be easy. There will be a tension, I believe, between the pastoral concern for farmers, dealers, auctioneers, and the prophetic call to be prepared to reorder businesses to be subject to God's just and gentle or compassionate rule for the whole

of the created order. It will not be easy, but I think that it will be necessary. I hope therefore that Synod will support the motion as a whole, will take note of the report and the amendments, but that that support will be given alongside a willingness to take the consequences of a prophetic rural ministry and mission.

The Bishop of Carlisle (Rt Revd Graham Dow): I wish I had asked the *Daily Telegraph* to print a note on their front page to say that the Bishop of Carlisle is now allowed out of Rose Castle. When we came out, of course, it was not news; we were only in for one week.

First, I want to say thank you. A great many members have told me that Cumbria has been in their prayers. We are very grateful indeed, and grateful also for gifts. Please do not forget Cumbria. You have heard about the emotional distress, the number of cases and the economic devastation, which is very serious. In many ways the hardest times are ahead. Meeting with Church Commissioners' tenant farmers recently, the question on their mind is, 'Where will our income come from in the next twelve months?'

I would echo what was said about the future by the Bishop of Blackburn, in what I thought was a splendid speech. We desperately need clarity about the future. We need to know how much farming the country needs or wants. Seventy-five per cent of the land is devoted to agriculture. It is the highest percentage in Europe. There was a policy after the Second World War to make more land available for food production. Is that still what is needed now? The question is what is needed or wanted in relation to food production and will the country support it, in a harsh and competitive global market. Will they support quality products as opposed to low-cost food? We do need clear direction. Is it land management that the country now wants? There are signs of moves in this direction, along with care for the environment. Will the Government then pay for that?

It is hard for farmers to change. Several generations have farmed in the same way. They will need a lot of help. There is a potential clash. If food production has to be competitive to satisfy the supermarkets, it will inevitably lead to larger units and less care for the environment. This has to be sorted out. We must have direction about the food production required and land management.

Lastly, I very strongly support Mr Holmes's amendment calling for a public inquiry. (Longtown, Cumbria, was the flashpoint from where the disease took off in all directions.) I support it for three reasons. First, we desperately need to know the truth. When was foot and mouth first known about here? There is a lot of anecdotal evidence which points to it being known in Government circles quite a while before it was made public. It would be invidious to quote that evidence, but an internal inquiry may hush it up. Secondly, we need to be well prepared another time. We therefore need the full facts. Why was the army not brought in earlier? Thirdly, a public inquiry would go some way to meet a lot of the anger among the farming community.

Mrs Sue Johns (Norwich): In March this year a motion was brought to our diocesan synod by our youth synod members. It was a very simple motion, commending everybody to buy fairly traded products. I was horrified to see that a lengthy amendment had been tabled by our then chairman of the DBF. It was not until he stood up to explain it that I understood his purpose. He came from the farming community and the reason behind his amendment, which on paper looked like a wrecking amendment, was because the farming community in Norfolk was already in crisis.

I want to emphasize what has already been said about the position regarding our food policy. It has not arisen just because of foot and mouth, but was in place long before. It has been happening for a long time, in particular in arable crops. The mover of that amendment went on to explain a great number of details, which I do not have time to go into here, but which were quite revealing. The percentage of family income spent on food has dropped considerably in the last 30 or 40 years, and the amount farmers are paid for what they produce has also dropped considerably. All of this has put great pressure on the agricultural community.

The things that they are asked to do by the food processors and retailers have mushroomed. For example, there are now full audit trails and there is complete traceability on food grown in this country. As a food scientist and someone who works for the Food Standards Agency, I am very pleased to hear that because we need that assurance; but it comes at a cost.

I believe that we should be supporting Viviane Hall's amendment, and also what the last speaker and the Bishop of Blackburn said in his opening speech. We need to think about the food policy that we want in this country. Do we want food that is of sufficient quality, knowing where it comes from, that is produced with good food hygiene practices, involving good animal welfare? Do we want that, or do we want cheap food?

It is not just for the Government to say; it is for us to say. Not only can we show what we want by means of what we actually buy; we can also press the Government to take forward the debate on food policy in this country. They have signalled that they will do it, but we need to press them to do it. We need to decide what we want to buy. In doing so, we will be giving our rural communities and our farmers the reassurance and the information that they need for the future.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The Bishop of Blackburn, in reply: We have had a realistic and unemotional debate,

and we have addressed some of the issues. If I have any disappointment at all about the debate, it is that we have tended to concentrate on farming and foot and mouth, and we have rather let the Church off the hook – apart from plaudits.

We need to remember the words of our first speaker, Dudley Coates, about the Church needing rural-proofing in its policies. Otherwise, we simply give a lot of direction to other people and then go on in our own sweet way ourselves. Towards the end of the last Synod, and before foot and mouth, we did have a major debate on the farming crisis.

It is good to know how the Church has been approached for more prayer and more ministry, as Mr Newcombe pointed out. It is important to note that there are small industrial communities in rural areas like Cornwall which have desperate problems but do not attract the grants. I could go on in this way for quite a long time, but I shall resist that.

Judy Hunt's point about some really deep theological issues – the Church being prophetic as well as pastoral – is a very important point. As we move on, I am mindful of what the Bishop of Carlisle said, that the hardest times may be yet to come for many of the rural communities. Let us remember that.

I am enormously grateful for the points that Mrs Johns made at the end. I shall return to that when we come to the amendment standing in the name of Mrs Hall.

The motion was put and carried.

The Bishop of Blackburn: I beg to move:

'That this Synod

- (a) express its concern for rural people and their economy in the wake of the foot and mouth epidemic; applaud the response of the Churches at local and national level; and call for a thorough consultation throughout society, initiated by Her Majesty's Government, on the future priorities and role of agriculture in the United Kingdom;
- (b) in the tenth anniversary year of *Faith in the Countryside*, renew the Church of England's commitment to its mission and ministry in rural areas, particularly in partnership with other Churches and bodies concerned for the well-being of the countryside and its people;
- (c) recognize the significant place accorded to the Church in the Government's Rural White Paper and call for this recognition to be matched by appropriate support by Her Majesty's Government;

- (d) encourage the dissemination of, discussion and appropriate action on the ideas in the spring/summer issue of *Country Way* and support for the work of the Arthur Rank Centre; and
- (e) acknowledge the interdependence of rural, urban and suburban communities.'

Mrs Viviane Hall (Oxford): I beg to move as an amendment:

'In paragraph (a) after the words "foot and mouth epidemic" *insert* the words "particularly by encouraging Government bodies and other institutions in the policy of sourcing meat from British farmers".'

The Bishop of Blackburn: I have enormous sympathy with Mrs Hall's amendment but I do not feel able to accept it, because I think that it is so narrow and concentrates simply on sourcing meat and British farmers. Mrs Hall talked about produce being locally-grown – wherever that means: there is 'local' for bananas, but it does not mean grown in this country!

This amendment could be seen as self-interest and very limiting in the number of products one is talking about. I would urge the Synod, therefore, while accepting the sentiment of Mrs Hall's amendment in the course of what we have heard in the debate, to reject it. There is a great deal of work going on in this. The Countryside Agency has its 'Eat the View' policy; we have heard about what is happening in the diocese of Exeter. I believe that this message is getting across, but if we carry this amendment it narrows the whole thing in a way that I do not think the Synod would be advised to do.

The amendment was put and lost.

Canon Paul Brett (Chelmsford): I beg to move as an amendment:

'In paragraph (a) *leave out* the word "agriculture" and *insert* the words "the countryside".'

The Bishop of Blackburn: Those who framed these amendments did, at this point, want to concentrate on agriculture. If Canon Brett had moved 'and countryside', I might have been able to take a neutral position on this. In all of the issues he referred to, however – the rural economy, landscape, Europe, the natural environment – agriculture plays a significant part.

It is the reverse of Mrs Hall's amendment. This widens it so that the focus is so vast the danger is that you do nothing. At this point in time we do need to have this cultural change, and to help in that process as far as agriculture is concerned. For those reasons, I would urge the Synod to resist this amendment.

The Chairman imposed a speech limit of two minutes.

Mr Terrence Musson (Truro): I am a full-time farmer and I would like to speak on behalf of my fellow farmers.

Since 3 March I have been under a D-notice and I have had a lot of phone calls from my fellow farmers who have been involved in the foot and mouth outbreak. The common questions throughout the last five months have been, 'What is our future? What is our role? Why are we being so marginalized?' This amendment takes out the word 'agriculture'.

After the election we were looking for markers from the Government. They dropped the word 'agriculture' from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It is now DEFRA, Department of the Environment and for Rural Affairs: again more on rural affairs than on agriculture. We do feel marginalized and as if we are of no use or worth whatever.

I run a farm of two hundred-odd animals, and I do not know in which direction to go. It is for this reason that we do need direction. Since last year I have built it up from 150 to 180 cows, and we do not know now whether to go to 250, 350 or what. Am I to keep all my animals in? Am I to zero graze? Am I to get bigger or smaller? I do not want to go down that line. I want to go down the line of what farmers and world trade have been asking for.

Farmers are interested in soil, topography, climate and wildlife. These vary widely and locally; accordingly, farming is and should be managed locally and in small units. Even a large unit is a small business unit in global terms. That is the line I would like to see. That is what we need to know. We are adaptable. Remember, we started off with horses and carts. We have moved; we can adapt.

The amendment was put and lost.

Revd Clive Mansell (Ripon and Leeds): I beg to move as an amendment:

'After paragraph (a) *insert* as a new paragraph:

"(b) praise the Addington Fund, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, the Farm Crisis Network and other voluntary organizations for their prompt actions in meeting the needs of many farming and other rural people brought about by the foot and mouth disease crisis and call upon Her Majesty's Government to respond with much greater urgency and in much greater measure to the financial problems which have become occasioned amongst countryside businesses and local authorities and across the economy of many rural areas;"

and re-letter the remaining paragraphs accordingly.'

The Bishop of Blackburn: The amendment itself is something like the old TUC composite, but I sense that this amendment would help the Synod to express some of the things that have been aired in our debate tonight. It would be a release for members of Synod for Mr Mansell's amendment to be put and for me, at the very least, to take a neutral attitude.

It is whether you think that the total motion is helped by having this kind of specific amendment added to it. It clearly expresses a number of points that have been made in the debate, and probably does it in the most cogent way one can – but it does make a very long resolution. I am prepared to leave this to the good sense of this wonderful Synod.

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich (Rt Revd Richard Lewis): I would just add to that, and it may be something which the Synod would like to hear.

A number of people have asked whether Addington is a place. Addington is a person. Richard Addington is a priest in Suffolk who retired early with a terminal illness.

It is echoing something that John Barton said in the Bible study the other day. I think that it is the vulnerability of Richard, and his awareness of the help that he needs, which has made him so firmly and fiercely press this fund as something that could help people immediately. This was in the face of swine fever in East Anglia. It was felt that that was a good thing to have in this motion, perhaps to reflect something that lies underneath – now that it is a multimillion-pound fund.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The amendment was put and carried.

Mr Roy Thompson (York): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘Leave out paragraph (b) (or (c) as the case may be) and *insert* the words

“(b) (or (c)) call on the Archbishops' Council to commission a task force to audit and report back to this Synod on the response of the Church to *Faith in the Countryside* in the light of changes in agriculture and their impact on rural life and to discuss with national and local government agencies, other Churches, industry and commerce how the life of the Church in rural communities might be sustained;”.’

The Bishop of Blackburn: It is pointed out to me that the last amendment correctly should be the ARC Addington Fund. Perhaps that could be noted?

Now to Mr Thompson's amendment. There is a lot of me that feels that this would be a good thing. Certainly when CMEAC came to the diocese of Blackburn it put the fear of God into us on that aspect of our life, and I do not like to be associated with a toothless motion. That is not a sort of characteristic for which I am noted! Nevertheless, we do have to be conscious of cost. It slightly undermines the work that is being done by the Arthur Rank Centre, by the Board of Mission's Rural Areas Committee, by the House of Bishops' rural panel, to set up yet another thing. Since we have a major review anyway, in a modest way, celebrating the rural Church – virtually every bishop in the country, with the advice of his agricultural rural adviser, has replied – I wonder if we need to have this full-scale task force?

If there is more money, I hope that when we come to the budget in November it will be put to giving greater assistance to the existing links and support that we have for the countryside rather than starting another group. My advice to the Synod, therefore, while I am very sympathetic with what Mr Thompson is trying to achieve, is not to accept this particular amendment.

Mr Michael Chamberlain (Archbishops' Council): This is a comment under SO 98 and it is in the eighth notice paper.

The amendment by Mr Thompson involves the establishment of a task force to conduct a wide-ranging review, which would be a major exercise. This could not be absorbed within existing staffing levels and would be likely to require the temporary appointment of an additional member of staff at an estimated cost, including travel and other costs, of some £40,000. Meeting costs for the task force might amount to an additional £5,000. The total estimated cost of implementing this proposal would therefore be of the order of £45,000.

In the light of the present financial situation and the budget we will be considering tomorrow, I would ask the Synod to reflect very carefully on the financial implications of Mr Thompson's amendment.

Mr Roy Thompson (York): Given the gracious comments from the Bishop, I would be happy to withdraw the amendment.

The amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

Revd Richard Thomas (Oxford): I beg to move as an amendment:

'After paragraph (c) (or (d) as the case may be) *insert* as a new paragraph:

“(d) (or (e)) affirm its commitment to support the work of the Arthur Rank Centre;”,

and re-letter the remaining paragraphs accordingly and, in re-lettered paragraph (e) (or (f)), *leave out* all words after “*Country Way*”.’

The Bishop of Blackburn: I think that the Synod probably wants to do this. It sums up what Mr Thomas has already said, about how this is very much a backroom organization which has served us splendidly. If this Synod can express its thanks in this particular way, Amen to that.

The Archdeacon of Warwick (Ven. Michael Paget-Wilkes): As a member of the Arthur Rank Centre management committee I would like to support this amendment and the Centre’s work itself.

Its crucial role has been to think about, instigate and develop in creative ways, Christian responses to the rural scene over almost 30 years. It has conceived, gestated and given birth to a whole range of rural movements and organizations – the Rural Housing Trust, Affordable Housing, the Rural Stress Information Network, Rural Minds, Farm Crisis Network. It has been a resource base to agricultural and rural chaplains, pastoral units for theological colleges, new rural incumbents’ courses, and has advised Government on rural employment and training schemes.

What is unusual about the Arthur Rank Centre, in a secular society that keeps faith issues firmly in the private sector, is its relationship with the Royal Agricultural Society of England, RASE. It is seen by the Society as a moral and ethical think tank. Around the Stoneleigh show ground, where RASE and the NFU and many farming communities meet, the ARC is there to raise moral and ethical questions from a Christian standpoint, in a place at the heart of British agriculture. It is committed to good stewardship of British farming practice. Since the 1970s it has raised concern about animal welfare; the use of antibiotics in broiler houses; the transporting of live animals; stress on dairy cattle; the concern for long-term effects on soil structure of repeatedly sowing barley and wheat.

Such debates, and others, with RASE and NFU and other farming leaders by the ARC staff have probably had far greater influence on the national agricultural scene than attempts by Christians in other fields of business and commerce to influence key issues on their spheres of work.

Over the last year or more, under Gordon Gatward, the ARC has grown immeasurably, advising on the Government White Paper, taking on the Addington Fund, and with the foot and mouth crisis. As this amendment insinuates, rural and farming life are at a crossroads. Farmers know it; Government knows it; rural dwellers know it. What is crucial is that, as this debate develops and as directions and decisions are made for the future, the considered Christian wisdom of the Arthur Rank Centre is there to influence the outcome.

(*The Chairman rang the bell.*)

Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark): I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The amendment was put and carried.

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘At the end *insert* the words:

“(f) (or (g) or (h) as the case may be) call on the Board of Mission to initiate discussions with the relevant secular and Church authorities to take action on the matters referred to in paragraphs (a) to (d); and”.’

The Bishop of Blackburn: Whilst I am grateful to Mr Royle for reminding us about issues I raised in my speech about the local Church and the deanery Church, as it were, relating to the secular authorities and other partnerships, I am not ready to accept his amendment as it is drafted.

It seems to me that to call on the Board of Mission limits what is already going on. There is the Board of Mission, through its rural areas committee; there is the Board for Social Responsibility, relating to the issues that Judy Hunt raised. The Board of Education is involved in this; bishops in the House of Lords are in this. I would hope that the members of the Archbishops’ Council have heard what Mr Royle said and have got the thrust of what his amendment is driving us towards.

I do believe that it is tremendously important that, at the regional level and at the local level, the Church comes forward with imaginative projects. The Countryside Agency has money available for community schemes in villages, which is simply not being taken up at the moment. This is the very thing that Mr Royle is wanting the rural Church to become engaged with. While I wholeheartedly support where he is coming from, therefore, I hope that he might feel able to withdraw the amendment. It limits it to one part of this Church, and we want the whole of the Church to be engaged.

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): Can we have an assurance that that in fact is going to be the case? I am talking about the whole of the Church. It seems a slight puzzle to me that we have all of these bodies doing these things.

The Bishop of Blackburn: I think therefore that you should have said the Archbishops’ Council. That is how we work these days. I can give you my assurance that the House of Bishops’ Rural Panel has heard what you have said and – just looking at the

Archbishop of York – the Archbishops’ Council has heard it. I cannot give you an assurance on behalf of that body, but I think that if you limit it to the Board of Mission then you are asking for less than is already happening.

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): I was told to limit it to the Board of Mission. I leave it to the mind of the Synod.

Dr Philip Giddings (Oxford): The Archbishops’ Council has heard what has been said – if that would be helpful.

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): As an obedient servant of this Synod, I would like to seek their permission to withdraw the amendment.

The amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr Nigel Holmes (Carlisle): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘At the end *insert* the words:

“(g) (or (h) or (i) as the case may be) call upon Her Majesty’s Government to institute a public inquiry into the outbreak of the foot and mouth disease, including the events leading up to it, its handling and its consequences”.’

The Bishop of Blackburn: Of all the amendments that have been proposed, for me this is the most difficult on which to give an adequate response. In my introductory speech I had the words ‘public inquiry’ in the text. Indeed, that was the text which the press received. I was advised to take it out, however, on the grounds that what we want is the appropriate public inquiry, without the inverted commas round the word ‘public’.

I am told that Mr Holmes is not right in the two things that he described. There is a whole raft of options in between. To limit it to a public inquiry, with all that implies, with lawyers and so on, you are into years of work, which may not be what this Synod wishes to achieve.

Mr Holmes’s amendment is in the form in which it is, however, and the Synod will have to decide. What we have asked for is appropriate work to be done by Government. Nobody is in any doubt about that, and the Church may want yet to have it; but we may be limiting what would be a better option by taking this amendment and using the words ‘public inquiry’ in the formal sense.

Mr Brian McHenry (Southwark): Members of the Synod may be aware that I was the solicitor to the BSE inquiry for over two years, from January 1998 until January 2000. I can confirm exactly what the Bishop has said. The BSE inquiry had very broad terms of reference, much as are indicated in Mr Holmes’s amendment. The broad terms of

reference inevitably, once they were unpacked, led to an enormous raft of work that had to be done. Not only that, but hundreds of witnesses had to be notified to give evidence to the inquiry, many of whom were then notified of what are called 'Salmon letters' in the trade – named after a long-dead judge – letters of potential criticism. All those witnesses had to be represented. The inevitable cost to the public purse was enormous.

I happen to believe that the outcome, Lord Phillips's report, was an admirable report. I did not write a word of it. I was the backroom boy who enabled this to happen. However, it does come at an enormous cost to the public purse and to all those involved.

Sometimes the report of some of these inquiries can be very much out of date. In the child abuse inquiry, on which I had worked earlier in the 1990s, by the time the report was published much of the evidence was out of date, and the proposals which emerged from the report had already been acted upon by Government.

I would ask the Synod, before it votes with its heart, to remember with its head. What I am effectively giving you is a secular SO 98 warning.

The Bishop of Bath and Wells (Rt Revd Jim Thompson): I want to speak against the last two speakers in relation to their intentions. I do so because the cost of a public inquiry may be great, but the cost of what has happened is absolutely vast and out of sight.
(*Applause*)

I have had quite a lot to do in my time as a bishop with broken-down relationships between Government and various sectors of society. I have rarely seen a greater breakdown than exists now, particularly between agriculture and Government. It is absolutely essential that trust is restored. In order to restore trust, the Government must face a public inquiry which will be independent of its own organs. It must face up to those realities and those on both sides of this argument need to come to terms with what is honestly their experience in this disaster that has affected us.

I do not think that we should be put off by the subtleties of what exactly is a public inquiry. We all know what we want, and the amendment puts the words quite adequately.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): I beg to move:

'That the question be now put.'

This motion was put and carried.

The amendment was put and carried.

The Bishop of Hereford (Rt Revd John Oliver): I would particularly like to thank

Mr Dudley Coates for his contribution and the commitment of the Methodist Church to sharing with the Church of England in ministering to the whole community in rural areas. That needs to be acknowledged and we need to celebrate our partnership.

There is some good news. Many of the ACORA celebration events had to be cancelled. We did manage to have one for the five dioceses of the West Midlands in Hereford in May. More than 60 people came: local, regional politicians; members of the Countryside Agency; farmers; people from regeneration groups. A lot of good was done by that, and it was a worthy way of celebrating *Faith in the Countryside*. I believe also that the country Church is being revitalized. I do not think we needed Mr Thompson's amendment. I am glad we did not pass it, because in many areas sometimes it is the minster pattern, as the Bishop of Blackburn said; sometimes in the deep country it is not that, but just groups of parishes where lay Christians are coming together, being trained and committed, and many of them have been ministering brilliantly to the victims of the foot and mouth crisis. I believe we simply need best practice to be followed. Come to the Diocese of Hereford and discover how it is done – though I am sure that it is done well elsewhere.

People have called for a new approach. There is a big crisis coming. The Bishop of Carlisle said that the worst may yet be to come. Those farmers whose sheep have caught the disease and who have had compensation are, as many people think, the lucky ones. Those who face an autumn and winter with no possibility of selling their stock, with 40,000 tonnes of sheep meat finding no market, with prices already very low, facing a complete collapse and no income – what is to happen? I am glad that we did ask for an urgent policy change by the Government.

Could we invite our Members of Parliament to look to what is happening in Scotland, where the devolved Scottish administration is putting in place a whole farm support system – flexible enough to reward a crofter in the islands and an arable farmer in the lowlands – with individual land management contracts to reward producers with an annual lump sum based on the economic, social and environmental benefits they bring to the area? That is something we would also call for in this country. Let us ask our MPs to vote for that.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

Revd Dr Paul Roberts (Bristol): Under SO 36B, is it possible to do this by a count of the whole Synod?

The Chairman: We will come to that in a moment.

The Bishop of Blackburn, in reply: I am grateful to all who have spoken and to the Bishop of Hereford. I hope that in this debate we have challenged Government, we have challenged the Countryside Agency and other bodies responsible for rural life. I hope, above all, that we have challenged the rural Church and ourselves, but also that we have put fresh heart into our brothers and sisters in the rural areas of this land.

I want to end therefore by paying an enormous tribute to the rural clergy and their congregations for the work that they have done, in the most desperate circumstances, yes, in the areas hit by foot and mouth, but also in those other areas where farmers and other rural people have been quite nervous, not to say frightened, by what they have thought might be coming to them. I believe that we owe them that tribute, and I would like to end this debate on that note.

The motion was put and carried, 394 voting for and none against, in the following amended form:

‘That this Synod

- (a) express its concern for rural people and their economy in the wake of the foot and mouth epidemic; applaud the response of the Churches at local and national level; and call for a thorough consultation throughout society, initiated by Her Majesty’s Government, on the future priorities and role of agriculture in the United Kingdom;
- (b) praise the ARC Addington Fund, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, the Farm Crisis Network and other voluntary organizations for their prompt actions in meeting the needs of many farming and other rural people brought about by the foot and mouth disease crisis and call upon Her Majesty’s Government to respond with much greater urgency and in much greater measure to the financial problems which have become occasioned amongst countryside businesses and local authorities and across the economy of many rural areas;
- (c) in the tenth anniversary year of *Faith in the Countryside*, renew the Church of England’s commitment to its mission and ministry in rural areas, particularly in partnership with other Churches and bodies concerned for the well-being of the countryside and its people;
- (d) recognize the significant place accorded to the Church in the Government’s Rural White Paper and call for this recognition to be matched by appropriate support by Her Majesty’s Government;

- (e) affirm its commitment to support the work of the Arthur Rank Centre;
- (f) encourage the dissemination of, discussion and appropriate action on the ideas in the spring/summer issue of *Country Way*;
- (g) acknowledge the interdependence of rural, urban and suburban communities; and
- (h) call upon Her Majesty's Government to institute a public inquiry into the outbreak of the foot and mouth disease, including the events leading up to it, its handling and its consequences.'

The Session was adjourned at 10.19 p.m.