

Oral Questions

Mr. Dinsdale: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As the charge also included the loss of substantial amounts of government cheques, will the minister comment on this matter and indicate to the House and country that this problem can be dealt with other than by establishing a police state situation in the Post Office Department.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, according to statistics I have been able to uncover, between \$1 million and \$1.5 million worth of cheques of all types are lost or stolen in Canada, but not necessarily in the postal department. These thefts can occur before the cheques reach the post office, or after they have been delivered. They can be stolen from private mail boxes or lost by recipients. There is no way of ascertaining where these thefts take place, and I do not think that the loss of \$1.5 million worth of cheques can be attributed to the 53,000 honest workers in the post office.

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PUBLISHING**DATE OF ANNOUNCEMENT OF POLICY RELATING TO FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS**

Mr. Heward Graffey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State. As the Secretary of State some time ago informed the House that the government intended to bring down a new policy relating to foreign publications in Canada before Christmas, does the Secretary of State still intend to announce such new policy relating to foreign publications before Christmas?

Hon. James Hugh Faulkner (Secretary of State): Not before Christmas, Mr. Speaker, but possibly in January.

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HEALTH**GROUND BEEF—GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO PROTECT CONSUMER FROM CONTAMINATED PRODUCT**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, may I direct my question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As additional surveys carried out by the minister's department have uncovered substantial numbers of cases of salmonella bacteria contamination, what steps is the minister taking to protect the Canadian people from this particular contaminated meat, in view of the importance of ground beef in these days of high meat prices?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to point out to the hon. member that the percentage of cases where there was contamination represents about 2 per cent of the cases involved, which is excellent compared to other countries where such analyses were made. In other countries, that percentage is 6 per cent and over.

[Mr. Mackasey.]

As for the improvements to be made, as the hon. member perhaps knows, we are going to double the number of investigations and special workshops in this connection. Seminars will be held with all meat handlers to make sure that they comply with sanitation regulations and the best practices at all stages of meat handling.

[English]

GROUND BEEF—RECOMMEND STIFFER PENALTIES FOR THOSE VIOLATING FOOD REGULATIONS

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister now prepared to recommend to his colleague, the Minister of Justice, the imposition of much stiffer penalties for people who violate food and drug regulations and other regulations governing food, and will he also recommend to the Minister of Agriculture that the Department of Agriculture step up their inspection capabilities, since it is alleged that a great deal of the contamination in ground beef takes place outside Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are going to examine every aspect of this problem, but I sincerely believe that probably the best punishment still is the publication of the names of the companies at fault, rather than incorporating in legislation fines the maximum of which would not necessarily be imposed by our courts.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE**GROUND BEEF—ALLEGATION CONTAMINATED MEAT IMPORTED—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Agriculture if he intends to look into the charges made by one of the supermarkets which was found to be in violation of the Food and Drugs Act, to the effect that the contamination of ground beef takes place at the source, in this case New Zealand, as inspection comes under the minister's responsibility.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I think one must keep in mind that once this meat enters Canada, it is handled many times by many different people long before it arrives at the retail outlet. We know that in one case the people handling hamburger meat were also handling raw fish at the same time. These things, of course, should not happen at all. We know that this beef is coming into this country from New Zealand and Australia. It is something I do not approve of, and we do not need it in this country in the first place.