

Oral Questions

Affairs and Northern Development, to seek whatever methods are necessary to bring about a cessation of advertising by some tourist operators that the fish are safe to eat until a thorough and comprehensive study has been completed so as to ascertain whether or not safety can be assured to those eating fish from water systems with high mercury pollution.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Such a motion pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 43 can be presented only with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Oral questions.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AGRICULTURE**POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE IN DAIRY POLICY—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. John Wise (Elgin): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture and is pursuant to the contents of a motion under Standing Order 43 which I had the pleasure of putting to the House last Wednesday, June 23. In view of the minister's remarks and the very orderly demonstration that is presently taking place on the hill, I want to ask when he intends to make an announcement regarding the changes in the 1976-77 dairy policy. There is an urgent and pressing need for the minister to take immediate action. Can he give the House, and particularly the dairy farmers of this country, some indication when such an announcement might be made—tomorrow, a month from tomorrow or not at all?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, we met last Friday with the minister of agriculture for Quebec, the minister of agriculture for Ontario and the chairman of the Canadian Dairy Commission to discuss the proposals they had made to us. Today we have received further proposals from the National Farmers' Union and they have to be considered as well. These will be considered and I would hope that if we are going to make an announcement it would be made next week some time.

Mr. Wise: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister give consideration to the removal of at least a percentage of the \$8.60 penalty and the return of at least a portion of the resultant holdback to producers in extremely difficult financial circumstances? I suggest this particular return could be based on the same relevant proportion by which production actually declined.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member is aware that last year we asked for curtailment of production several times through the Canadian Dairy Commission and the market supply and management committee and did not receive it. They made the decision that they should take the drastic action to curtail production and

[Mr. Malone.]

production seems to be coming into line at the present time. We have not got the figures from all the provinces. Before we make any change we have to notify and discuss this with every province concerned with the dairy issue. This takes time. We cannot make it just because of the two major provinces wanting us to make changes. If this had taken place last year when we asked for curtailment of production, we would be in the position where we would not have had to take the drastic action that we took this year.

I want to make it clear that even if we do lift the monthly quotas and change the \$8.60 levy, that does not mean that there will not be some unfairness or inequities still existing because of the way that the provincial boards allocate their quotas. I am sure that the hon. member is aware of that.

POSSIBILITY OF SHORTAGES IF NO CHANGE MADE IN DAIRY POLICY

Mr. John Wise (Elgin): Mr. Speaker, I have a final supplementary question for the minister. Does the minister not realize that if immediate changes are not made we run a high risk of being short of product by as early as September?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I read—I was going to say what the "wise member of parliament" has said.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: What did the dumb minister say?

Mr. Whelan: Our reports show that even with the dry conditions in Europe they will probably just meet their targets for production. The last four months show that in Europe they have increased their surplus of skim milk powder by 200,000 tons. We met with the Australian minister of agriculture last week and discussed the same problem that they have. I say it would be wrong to intimate to the people that there could be a shortage of dairy products. We certainly know that there will not be any shortage of dairy products in this nation. One of our people from the dairy commission has just returned last week from Europe where he made a personal survey and contacted people there, and he gives us the report that there is not going to be the scarcity of dairy products that some people think there will be. If we could forecast as accurately as the hon. member suggests, then we probably would not have to be as harsh with the quotas as we are, but we cannot take the risk of just piling it up and hoping that somebody will buy it.

[Translation]

REQUEST TO DELAY IMPLEMENTATION OF DAIRY POLICY TO ALLOW ADJUSTMENTS BY PRODUCERS

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Agriculture.

According to the statement he just made that if all industrial milk producers had reduced their production last year we would not have the difficulties we are now facing, the minister is fully aware that, in the present