

Oral Questions

AGRICULTURE

**GOVERNMENT ACTION TO AID BRITISH COLUMBIA
PRODUCERS MARKET CATTLE QUARANTINED FOR BLUE
TONGUE**

Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the serious situation in which some ranchers in central British Columbia find themselves due to the quarantine in that area by the federal Department of Agriculture because of blue tongue, has the minister any plan or is he taking any steps to help them market the 15,000-odd head of cattle which they usually market in the fall?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member is not intimating that the total cattle population in that area is infected with blue tongue, because we are quite certain it is not. We want to make sure that the rest of the cattle population in Canada is protected. We have a full-time, top CDA veterinarian stationed in that area. We intend to be as fair as possible in co-operation with these people, and they are co-operating with us 100 per cent at the present time in testing the cattle, rounding them up, and so on. We are sure that with the full co-operation of everyone, including the hon. member, we can have this settled in a harmonious fashion, and that everybody will be treated fairly and squarely.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Speaker, it is well recognized that there are many ramifications of a quarantine of this nature. I would specifically ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he is ready to move, and move quickly, this fall if there are no buyers for these cattle, especially if the buyers that do come attempt to take advantage of the ranchers because of the situation?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. In view of the large hypothetical element in that question I would hesitate to allow it.

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HEALTH

**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL MEETING ON MERCURY POISONING—
REASON FOR EXCLUSION OF NATIVE REPRESENTATIVES**

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare why it was that at this morning's meeting between the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the ministers of the provincial governments regarding mercury poisoning the native Indians of the area were not included in the decision-making portion?

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as I understand it there was a meeting this morning with the very Indians about which the hon. member expresses concern. I have no report on the actual way the meeting took place this morning. Perhaps after the meeting has concluded, which should be in the next half hour or so, the minister might be available to answer that question.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Malone: Mr. Speaker, I would direct this supplementary question to the Government House Leader. Could he indicate what was so sensitive about this morning's meeting that card-carrying press people were barred from the hallways of the Confederation Building where the meeting was taking place?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am unable to answer the question because I was unaware of the event.

● (1200)

**REASON DEPARTMENT REFUSED TO PROVIDE INFORMATION
ON THE CONTENTS OF PILLS**

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I understand that in the minister's absence he is prepared to answer a question I asked the minister on June 28 as to the reason the department refused to provide to members of the general public information as to the content of drugs, including in this instance the birth control pill.

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I have a report now from the department about that inquiry. What seems to have happened was that the inquiry was directed to the family planning branch which does not have scientists with the technical expertise to give information about the content of birth control pills. They give information about the pill in general but not about the content. The practice of that division is to refer technical inquiries of the sort to which the hon. member refers to the health protection branch where that information is available. In fact, the active ingredients of pills are a matter of public record published annually in the condominium—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: You mean compendium.

Mr. Kaplan: The information is published in the pharmaceutical and specialties compendium. As I said, the practice of the branch is to refer such inquiries either to the health protection branch or to the physician who prescribed the pill in question. I cannot tell in this particular case whether the person who inquired was or was not referred, but that is the general practice of the branch. Apparently she telephoned again a few days later and she was referred to the health protection branch or to her physician for that information.

An hon. Member: I hope it was on time.

Mr. Baldwin: Following that penetrating answer—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: —I should like to ask the hon. gentleman if he could confirm that it is not the policy of the department to refuse information to members of the general public who inquire as to the contents of drugs.

Mr. Kaplan: That is correct. They are referred to the branches of the departments which have the information.