

Oral Questions

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, when the right hon. Leader of the Opposition asks—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I am so used to answering questions about beef and farming put by the right hon. member for Prince Albert that I got a little confused.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan: I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. Later this day I hope to have in the possession of every opposition member all the details of how this program is to work, so that it can be readily understood. We realize there is some confusion about a plan like this, especially in the minds of opposition members. We want it to be in plain language so they can readily understand it and explain it to their constituents in order that the whole country can understand the plan as it should operate.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to overtax the mind of the Minister of Agriculture, but I wonder whether he can answer the very simple question I asked him. Is the subsidy to be included in the price the processor pays, and therefore kept by the processor, or is it to be added to the price paid by the processor? It is not a question of confusion in the minds of the opposition; it is a question of confusion in the minds of the people in the trade.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the whole formula that must be followed, if this is to be a success, is not that easy to recount in one answer to one little question. I can say this, Mr. Speaker: It will be a fair policy.

Mr. Fairweather: What is it? We do not know whether it is fair until we hear it.

Mr. Whelan: It will be in line with what some members of the opposition have been asking, that consumers should not have to pay more for beef, etc., and that the government should be participating in this kind of program. What it does mean is that the packers and the processors will be paying the price and they will be reimbursed for it.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, may I ask another supplementary question which is necessary in order to try to get rid of the existing confusion. I understand from the answer the minister gave me that the subsidy will in fact be paid to the processor and will not be added to the price paid to the producer by the processor. I wish to ask the minister a question about this subsidy which is to be paid to the processor, who may very well be buying cattle from jobbers, that is, cattle imported from the United States. Why is the minister subsidizing the possible importation of United States cattle with the Canadian taxpayers' money in this way?

● (1430)

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the initial announcement clearly stated this is a subsidy on Canadian cattle for Canadian consumers. That means the meat must be consumed in Canada. Accurate records must be kept of all accounts, bills of sale and so on, so these can be checked

[Mr. Stanfield.]

by both their auditors and our auditors to ensure this is carried out in a proper manner.

Mr. Stanfield: What assurance can the minister give that all cattle bought by processors and on which a subsidy is paid will in fact be produced in Canada and not imported from the United States?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, we know all the cattle—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: Have you got them on the voters' list?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The steers are conservative.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, it may sound strange to say that you can tell an American animal from a Canadian one, but you can tell. Any good feeder or buyer can tell by looking at them.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan: All cattle brought in from the United States on consignment are directed right to the packing firm. There would be no doubt as to the proper identification of American cattle or Canadian cattle.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SUBSIDY TO BEEF PRODUCERS—REQUEST FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO ENSURE THAT PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS BENEFIT

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. As the new policy is designed to benefit the consumer and the producer, will the minister consider setting up an advisory committee in the early stages of this plan, possibly with representatives from the National Farmers Union or other representative groups in agriculture, to ensure that the money goes to the producer and that the consumer gets the benefit?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I think that is a worthy suggestion. It will be considered. But I can tell the hon. member that we have had meetings as late as 15 minutes ago with people who represent the farmers and beef producers of this nation. I understand my officials have been in consultation with the Consumers Association because of their concern that the benefit be passed on to consumers. This is a worthy suggestion and it will be considered.

SUBSIDY TO BEEF PRODUCERS—ISSUANCE OF INSTRUCTIONS TO TRADE ON ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to my leader's question to the Minister of Agriculture and further to the minister's announcement last Friday of the seven cent subsidy. In view of the extreme confusion and nearly disastrous conditions presently existing on the Toronto cattle market