

Adjournment Debate

Referendum Mean?" I think his thoughts on this subject are very useful to the House. He wrote:

One of the most destructive aspects of the referendum, and the reason why many Canadians find it almost irresistible, is its counterfeit air of being conclusive. It pretends to be an honest and straightforward way of making a choice—Yes or No. It panders to the eternal Canadian yearning for an ultimate solution to our most vexing internal problem and it reinforces the illusion that there is an easy answer.

He points out also that in an era of public opinion polls the result is a foregone conclusion. He argues that far from revealing public opinion it prevents its orderly development—it becomes a political weapon, an interruption and distortion of our political process and, at worst, an entertainment.

I certainly would have found it much easier to have been in the House during the debate on capital punishment if there could have been a referendum. I would not have had to stand here and vote as I had to do. I would have been happier to serve my constituents and my party at the same time. But had I not been able to vote as my people wanted me to in Vancouver-Kingsway I would have voted their way, and resigned. That is how strongly I feel that I am a representative—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hour set aside for the consideration of private members' business has now expired.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

AGRICULTURE—POSSIBILITY OF IMPORT QUOTA FOR BEEF IN 1978

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, the question which brings me into the adjournment debate tonight is one I had hoped would be replied to by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). That, in turn, relates to my question of November 16. But first I want to say that I appreciate the written response I have received from the parliamentary secretary to the minister who, I presume, will respond to me tonight. My question on that occasion dealt with my concern, and the concern of the Canadian cattle industry, over the possibility that there may not be control by quotas over beef imports in the coming year. I refer specifically to imports from Australia and New Zealand.

● (1802)

I remind the parliamentary secretary that the current quotas which have been in operation all this year, particularly so far as Australia and New Zealand are concerned, are now almost filled. As at the week ending November 5, combined totals of

[Mrs. Holt.]

imports of beef from Australia and New Zealand amounted to 109 million pounds as against an allowable quota of 120 million pounds. This means that about 11 million pounds still remain. These were the figures two weeks ago, so probably by now the quota is almost filled.

I should like to ask the parliamentary secretary whether he knows when this quota might be filled. Usually there is some indication when a quota will be filled once it reaches near completion. With rather plentiful supplies of beef from the major exporting countries of the world, particularly Australia and New Zealand, there have been only very slight downward adjustments in world supplies of beef available for export.

Canada's cattle industry needs to know now before the end of the year that somewhat similar quotas will be in effect for 1978. I think it is important that these quotas be announced before the end of the year. Can we expect somewhat lower quota levels for Australia and New Zealand in view of the currently plentiful domestic supply in Canada? The fact that current quotas are going to be nicely filled by the end of the year, or before the end of the year, is a clear indication that these quotas have worked very well this year and that they should be continued through 1978.

An early or interim announcement would be appropriate since the new beef import legislation will not be available until early next year. I refer to the speech of the minister during the throne speech debate as reported at page 298 of *Hansard* for October 26. He said:

If necessary, I have been authorized by the government to look at the possibility of the passing of a Meat Authority Act, provided I could be assured of very close collaboration of the opposition.

After three years of persistent support for this legislation, both personally and by almost every cattlemen's association across Canada, this is very welcome news. We in the Conservative party, cattlemen's associations, stock growers organizations and many other livestock groups across Canada, will certainly give our close collaboration on such legislation. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the parliamentary secretary on that, provided the new legislation is reasonable and does the job of serving as a long-range beef import policy for Canada. I urge the minister to act quickly so that we can take a look at this new legislation.

● (1807)

What does the word "authority" mean? He should tell us that very shortly. I find it somewhat ironic, after pressing for such legislation in a very personal way for three or four years and being most emphatically turned down by the Minister of Agriculture and previous ministers of industry, trade and commerce, that now we have the strange situation where both the Minister of Agriculture, and the present Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner), are indicating support for this long overdue legislation. Could it be that the new Senate report on beef imports was responsible for this turn-around by the government? If there is competition between cabinet ministers to bring in this meat import legislation, all I can say is, it is about time. The only important issue