

Adjournment Debate

of this short grass is the highest and best use of these lands, and the multiple use concept of these lands by cattle, wildlife, including rattlesnakes—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the subject raised by the hon. member tonight, that is, the question of the use of the Suffield range for grazing cattle, is one we have discussed together; we have debated it over a number of years. In answers that I have given during the question period and in personal conversations with the hon. member I have tried to make my position quite clear.

The Suffield range is held by the federal government primarily for military training purposes. The range can, however, be of very real benefit to cattlemen in the area, particularly in times of emergency and in periods of drought, as it has been in the past. It seems to me it would be best for all concerned, including the cattlemen, if the range is kept as a reserve for emergencies, as in the past, and not used for grazing on a continuous basis. If the range is used each year for continuous grazing there will be no extra pasture available during periods of drought.

There are other factors related to the ecology and the protection of wildlife which clearly point to the desirability of not using the range on a continuous basis. For these reasons it is not planned to open the range for grazing in the current year, but I see no reason why we should not give full consideration to re-opening it in future years in special circumstances, as we have done in the past. We are ready to use the range as a reserve and I think this is in the best interests of the cattlemen in the area. This, I believe, will meet the views of those who are interested in the ecology, and I think it will also meet the requirements of the Department of National Defence.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON
INVESTIGATION OF DUTY FREE SHOPS—REASON FOR
WARNING TO CONSUMERS ABOUT PURCHASES AT DUTY FREE
SHOPS

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, on February 18 I asked the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) a straightforward and non-contentious question about duty free establishments—I emphasize the words “establishments”. I wanted to know what progress was being made in investigating complaints. I made no specific reference to which ones, or to why the minister's own departmental magazine entitled *Consumer Contact*, published under his authority, had stated:

Some articles, like brand name cameras, can sometimes be obtained at Canadian department stores at lower prices than at duty free shops.

Imagine my surprise, Mr. Speaker, when the minister reacted, not like a tiger—for which I might have respected him—but like the angry pussy cat which Canadians have seen he can be in defending the rights of consumers, saying I was more interested in publicity than I was in the results of any investigations and that my question about the contents of his magazine relating to duty free shops

[Mr. Hargrave.]

seemed to question the good faith and integrity of those who had prepared articles for it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of good clean fun may I remind the minister that on occasion cabinet ministers and even he, I venture, have been known to prepare press releases, or cause them to be prepared for publicity purposes. So I concede that I was indeed interested in bringing to the attention of the public my desire to see the minister do his job and protect the consumer. Which brings me to the point of asking once again what is going on.

● (2210)

Why is the department not willing to justify the basis on which it cautioned consumers against duty free shops? Or is it willing, and the minister was not sufficiently informed?

I received a very gracious letter from Robert J. Bertrand, the director of investigation and research, on January 19. In the letter he mentioned a complaint previous to mine which was being examined. It came from a member of the public and was presently being examined under the misleading advertising provisions of the Combines Investigation Act. Then Mr. Bertrand confused me a bit by saying two paragraphs later that the confidentiality requirements of the act did not allow him to indicate whether or not an inquiry under the act was in progress—although he had just so stated. In any event, Mr. Speaker, I am sure Mr. Bertrand is doing his job, and I am confident that whoever wrote the article in the October issue of the minister's publication did so in good faith, and frankly I resent the minister's juvenile attempt to infer that I suggested otherwise.

Does the minister really want me, I wonder, to make public letters that I have received illustrating some abuses that his department is supposed to be investigating? Since the minister chose to treat my questions on February 18 as relating to my letter of January 9 regarding Sky Shops, let me remind him that it will soon be two months since he received it, and I now have many more letters from the public which I can pass along to him. However, judging by his performance so far, it looks as if there is little point in doing so.

I want to close by asking my friend, the minister, to answer my question and to do his job—to refrain from going into a snit and to inform the House what research was done by the author or authors of this article previously mentioned, and what is the current situation on the investigation of complaints against duty free establishments. I also ask him to keep in mind, in assessing pricing practices of establishments like Sky Shops, that not only ought he to concern himself with comparative prices available to consumers in Canadian department stores, but also with the prices that these goods can be purchased at the destination of those leaving the country. If a traveller can buy a camera for \$100 at a Canadian duty free store, for \$90 at a Canadian department store, and get that same camera at the foreign city or country to which he is proceeding for \$80, then this is also very pertinent.

Mr. Art Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I find it, and I know the minister finds it, very unfortunate that the