

Mr. NESBITT: This is a very interesting discussion, Mr. Chairman. While I must say I sympathize with the constituents of Mr. Benidickson's riding, I do not think the necessity for bringing flowers for a funeral in one place would necessarily warrant a change in the administrative regulations. These regulations would have to apply everywhere.

However, something comes to my mind as a result of this discussion which I think should be looked into and considered by the department. In the last few years, due to a change in the habits, customs and tastes of Canadians, in the winter months in particular—I know this is true in my part of the country and I presume it is true elsewhere—large quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables are brought into the country. These are of a very perishable nature. The have to come over bridges in our part of the country at Detroit or Niagara Falls, for example, and they often come over on Sundays for the Monday markets.

It would seem to me that this increase in the cost of a small load would add something to the cost of bringing into the country these perishable fruits and vegetables.

This may be a negligible item, but I would like an answer to this question. If a large truck load of fruits and vegetables, for instance, was coming up from Florida to southern Ontario, would it be necessary to bring only one customs appraiser down, or would it be necessary to have two or three? What is the extent of it? I am interested to know the answer, because it is the kind of thing that follows from Mr. Benidickson's remarks, and it may apply to other perishable goods besides fruits and vegetables. No doubt there are other things which might incur great damage in the cold winter weather. Perhaps the deputy minister could give us some information on that.

Mr. SIM: Yes, I would be very happy to do so. This is one of the things I mentioned as one of the procedures when we were last before this committee. It has been worked out to facilitate clearance of perishable commodities.

There is a practice whereby in a situation of emergency the importer can get his goods immediately in order that there will be no spoilage. I think the nature and extent of the examination required would differ with the particular commodity involved. However in most instances—I think we are talking about one truck only—one appraising officer would be adequate to deal with it.

Mr. GRAFFTEY: Mr. Chairman, what is normally done with perishables confiscated at the border?

Mr. McILRAITH: You mean the kind that gurgle?

Mr. SIM: Does the hon. gentleman have in mind goods not declared which are taken by the customs officer?

Mr. GRAFFTEY: I have that in mind also. There are goods which are confiscated because they are not declared. I imagine—I am perhaps not correct in saying this—that people might bring vegetables over and decide to leave them with the customs officer and not pay the duty on them. I am thinking of cigarettes, candies and groceries.

Mr. SIM: In respect to cigarettes there is a procedure about which I will tell the committee. This is a special service rendered without any charge. Our officers go around the hospitals in their spare time and hand these cigarettes out to disabled veterans. We are very glad to be able to do that.

I do not recall much of this sort of thing in respect to other perishables. I seem to remember that in the particular part of the country which the hon. gentleman comes from—the members will perhaps forgive me for identifying themselves with their questions—there has been difficulty about margarine. In some cases we have had to confiscate margarine.

My recollection is that on occasions we have given things of a perishable character to charitable institutions, because it was not possible to hold them for