

Inquiries of the Ministry

which I have received from the Syndicat coopératif des producteurs de fraises de Bellechasse, an organization grouping four hundred members in my constituency for the production and sale of strawberries, protesting the importation of considerable quantities of strawberries from Holland which threaten to affect the market for their product.

The question is also based on an article written by the prominent journalist, Mr. Eugène L'Heureux, and published in newspapers whose combined circulation is more than 300,000. The question is this:

1. What is the actual protection granted the strawberry growers against foreign importations?

2. Has the Department of Agriculture any information with regard to importation of strawberries from Holland?

3. Has the situation been examined by any department with a view to determining whether such importations may be considered as dumping?

4. Is it true that such imported strawberries are processed by a method that is not accepted by the United States Department of Agriculture? If so, will his department consider imposing similar restrictions on importations into Canada?

5. Does the department know of any other method by which our strawberry producers could be protected against mass importation of cheap-selling strawberries from abroad?

Some hon. Members: Order paper.

Mr. Picard: I do not think my hon. friends opposite should protest, in view of the kind of questions they ask.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member has a number of questions to ask, I think they should appear on the order paper. But I realize that a question relating to the importation of strawberries may be an urgent one. I am sure strawberries are not yet in season but perhaps I should allow the question to be answered.

Mr. Picard: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, may I just ask the question as it stands at the moment, and allow the minister to answer if he is ready to do so?

Mr. Speaker: That is what I have suggested.

Right Hon. J. G. Gardiner (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have the answer here, and I think I might just as well give it.

The hon. member was kind enough to let me have advance notice of these questions, and I have had the following answers prepared:

1. The tariff on fresh imported strawberries is ten per cent. However, during the produc-

[Mr. Picard.]

tion season on application from the growers through the Canadian Horticultural Council a duty of 1½ cents pound may be applied for a period up to six weeks. The duty on imported strawberries packed in SO₂ is 25 per cent.

2. The Department of Agriculture has no knowledge of any recent importations of SO₂ strawberries from Holland, although I am advised that there were some importations last year.

3. This matter has been discussed with the Department of National Revenue and the Department of Trade and Commerce. Following an inquiry into the situation by these departments we were advised that there was no evidence of dumping in these importations.

4. I am advised that while the United States food and drug administration prohibits the use of sulphur dioxide as a preservative for fruit used in the manufacture of jam, they do not prohibit its use as a preservative for dried or glacé fruits. So far as the Canada Department of Agriculture is concerned, the preserving of fruit in sulphur dioxide solution is considered an efficient and inexpensive method of preserving the farmers' product until it can be processed, and is a practice followed by processors for export and for use by jam manufacturers in Canada. In the final processing of the product the sulphur dioxide is removed by the cooking. The finished product is analysed to ensure that it is fit for human consumption.

5. No.

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Dion in the chair.

The Chairman: Order. The house again in committee of supply. Is it the pleasure of the committee to proceed to the consideration of the estimates in detail, beginning with page 269?

Mr. McIvor: Carried.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Drew: Just a minute. Does that mean that, item by item, we shall proceed without further reference to the numbered item until each item is disposed of?

Mr. Claxton: That is right.

The Chairman: I would call the first item, item 245, the details of which are to be found at page 269.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Defence forces—

245. To provide for the defence forces of the navy, army and air services and defence research and development, and to authorize total commitments for