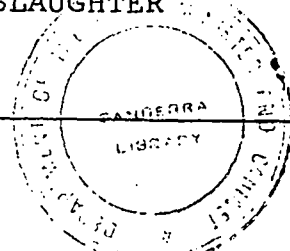


FEDERAL COUNCIL - EXPORT OF HORSES TO JAPAN FOR SLAUGHTER

Question:

... export of horses to Japan in the conditions in the which they are currently being transported. The Victorian government has indicated its concern in the matter, and I would be grateful if the Prime Minister could indicate whether the Federal Government is proposing to take any action in the area.

Prime Minister:

Thank you for the opportunity of saying something about this subject. The export of horses to Japan and the shipment that was unloaded in Sydney does represent a disgrace of a very high order. They should never have been loaded, should never have been allowed to be shipped, and we do owe thanks to the RSPCA for drawing the matter to attention. I have got to say that this is not the first time that this has happened. A shipment in December 1979 was also held up by the RSPCA for a while, but as a result of that, agreed guidelines were established for the export of horses to Japan.

In this particular instance, it is very plain that the guidelines have not been adhered to, and the export should not be allowed. Marshall Baillieu, I think, has seen the horses, and would confirm the seriousness of the situation. Peter Nixon issued a statement yesterday saying that he was calling for a complete review of the procedures in relation to permits in these matters. Generally, while the Commonwealth is responsible, the States act as agents and are the authorities that assess the matters and see whether or not the shipment meets the various circumstances.

I discussed this because we are both involved, this morning with Dick Hamer, and we both agree that there needs to be a review as Peter Nixon did announce yesterday, of the procedures, to make sure that it can't happen again.

Now, the horses have been unloaded in Sydney. At the moment, I understand that the RSPCA are paying for the stabling of the horses and the feeding of them because I think that the owners have refused. Well, I discussed it with Peter Nixon this morning, and we will not allow these particular horses, this particular shipment, to be exported. Export controls will be used to prevent it, unless the owners pay for the horses and look after them in Sydney. Then they can do what they like with them, and if they get them to a fit condition to meet the guidelines to be exported in a proper way, then that will be able to occur. But there is no reason why the RSPCA should have to pick up the bill for the stabling of the horses in Sydney, and with Peter Nixon, we agreed that the Government should recompense the RSCPA for what it has done and the costs it might have incurred in that particular instance.

I can't say any more about this at the moment. It is just one of those instances that should not have happened. Something broke down in relation to it. A Commonwealth veterinary officer did inspect these horses in Sydney, and as a result of that, it was certainly found that they didn't meet the standards. A number of the horses

were extremely ill, had been damaged and bruised, and almost looked as if they had been knocked about - well, they had been knocked about, and many of them were not fit to travel.

Well, we have got to establish arrangements between the State and the Commonwealth to make sure that this sort of thing does not and cannot occur again. It is the second time in a matter of three or four months in which it has occurred, and I think in both cases, out of the Port of Melbourne.

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