

Amish issue

Sir: I am a farmer from the Mt. Elgin area who lives and works beside the Amish people. Like yourself and the majority of your readers I think it is a shame that such an honest, hard-working group of citizens should feel they must pull up stakes and move back to the United States whence they came to pursue their religion and lifestyle. Their plight seems to be in direct contrast to the "land of the free" vision we all prefer to think of Canada.

However, the circumstances which have led to the Amish moving back to the U.S. are not a result of the Ontario Milk Marketing Board's (OMMB) indifference to their right to farm and market their produce as they see fit. The situation has, in fact, arisen out of the OMMB's concern for the rights of the thousands of bona fide dairy farmers, as well as the rights and demands of the consuming public.

Through regulation by the OMMB, the majority of dairy farmers are subject to phenomenal expense in the form of milking machines, handling equipment and on-farm bulk storage and cooling. True, these modern devices aid in the speed and efficiency in handling of the milk, but the primary intent of the OMMB is to minimize the introduction of bacteria and other contaminants into the product. Also, dairy farmers are compelled to comply with strict standards regarding the cleanliness and sanitary conditions of the milking parlor floor, walls and ceiling as well as the liberal use of disinfectants and hot water. All of this at the cost of the operator.

In the past, and until Oct. 31, the only group exempt from these regulations, as well as the resulting cost and inconvenience, has been the Amish. Had it not been for their religious status, they would have been forced to comply long ago. Also, the milk they sell, falls far be-

low the quality and health standards typical of that which is produced by the modern dairy farmer. Still Amish receive the same price for their milk. Surely people do not feel that the bona fide dairy farmer should continue to cover up, at their great expense, the lower production standards of the Amish farmer?

The idea that the Amish maintain a co-operative bulk storage and cooling tank would make no improvement whatsoever over the manner in which their milk is presently being handled. In both cases the cow would be milked by hand into an uncovered pail. The pail is carried to and dumped into the milk can which is capped and placed in water (their only method of cooling) until pick-up. After an uncertain period of time the milk would then be transported to a bulk cooler either by a horse-drawn cart or an unrefrigerated truck. The only difference between the two cases lies in the ownership of the bulk tank cooler (either Amish co-operative or milk processor) and possibly, however unlikely, the duration in which the milk is left in the can on the farm.

One final point is that the consuming public demands the OMMB as well as all other marketing boards provide for us a commodity of highest attainable quality. Should they allow any facet of the industry to produce an unsafe product, the OMMB would be violating the rights of hundreds of thousands of consumers in Southwestern Ontario to a safe, wholesome product, not to mention the rights of thousands of dairy farmers who are forced to cover up for the unsafe production techniques of the Amish dairy farmer.

I have nothing but the highest regard and admiration for the Amish. Their way of life could be a lesson for us all. Unfortunately they are unchanging people trying to live in a changing society and their current methods are a threat to the rights of the consumer, as

well as other producers. The "put up or get out" approach may seem rather harsh but I still must commend the OMMB for its unpopular stance for the consuming public's own good. Also, I condemn Agricultural Minister William Newman, for his attempt at acquiring popularity, while at the same time slapping the faces of our province's milk producers.

GORD RICHENS

Mt. Elgin

Must respond

Sir: After reading Eric Bender's articles on the plight of the Amish in Ontario, I was deeply saddened.

When the government of this province cannot respond to the simple needs of a group of people as good and inspirational (we can learn much from their tolerance and pacifism) as the Amish, then one must seriously question the moral value held by the rulers of Ontario.

The rights of the Amish are far more important than any petty Ontario Milk Marketing Board rules. If we lose these people, we will lose a part of the beauty of this country — the ability for people of all beliefs to live together.

An accommodation must be made in Ontario for the Amish.

RICK SCHNEIDER

London

Ends

No More Milk Cans As Era

Dec. 15, 1977
The end of an era this week with the discontinuing of sending milk in cans. It was back in the 1870's that the factories in this area: Maple Grove, Avonbank and Black Creek were built. Milk was taken to the factories by wagons drawn by horses in 40 gallon cans, then 30 gallon cans, 15 gallons, later in 10 gallons and now at the last 8 gallon cans have been used and anyone having these different sizes will be in the antique business.

Fraser Gibb remembers when they had a glass near the bottom of a ten gallon can with a tap at the bottom and after letting the milk stand for a period of time the skim milk was let run out the tap at the bottom of the can till the cream could be seen through the glass, then the tap turned off and the cream was then emptied into a container. He also remembers at Maple Grove Factory a large pen of pigs would be kept beside the factory and all excess whey or skim milk would be piped over and fed to the pigs.

Nicol Hotson remembers stir-

ring milk with extra long handled ladle and in 1926 there was a 50th anniversary of Avonbank Cheese and Butter factory and Nicol's father the late Alex Hotson was the only

surviving director that had organized the factory back in 1876. My father Bert Matthison remembers while working for the late Willie Bell would bring in the 30 gallon cans of whey

from the road by cart every day after dinner rain or shine.

So as we see the huge bulk tank milk truck pulling up to the milk house to empty the farm

bulk tank run by hydro, it is a far cry of the 80 or 100, 150 and 300 lb. cans that had to be rolled or lifted in the 100 years of canhandling in this area.

Zorra Tp. appoints new clerk-treasurer

INGERSOLL — Wayne Johnson, Norwich Township deputy clerk, has been named clerk-treasurer for Zorra Township, it was announced Tuesday.

Johnson, 44, clerk-treasurer for the former township of East Oxford for 3½ years, and Norwich Township deputy clerk since Jan. 1, 1975, replaces retiring clerk Gordon Gregory on Dec. 1.

Gregory, 65, has been Zorra Township clerk-treasurer for about three years. Before Oxford County was restructured in 1975, he held the same position in the former township of East Nissouri for 15 years.

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