

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

POLICY RESPECTING SOFT DRUGS OFFENCES

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Prime Minister. Can he inform the House of his government's policy for dealing with marijuana and cannabis, in view of the fact that in 1972 the minister of national health and welfare promised a change in legislation and in 1973 the minister of national health and welfare, now the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations, also promised a change in legislation? The government introduced Bill S-19 and the Liberal party convention endorsed a change in the law dealing with marijuana and cannabis, changing them from the Narcotic Control Act to the Food and Drugs Act.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct in reminding the House that the government introduced this bill in the Senate. Indeed, it was approved and passed by the Senate. If the hon. member is making an offer on behalf of his party—

Mr. Lawrence: He is asking what you are prepared to do.

Mr. Trudeau: I will tell the hon. member what we are prepared to do. If there is all-party agreement to deal with this bill at all stages in one day, we will introduce it tomorrow.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister well knows that we usually like to see the wording of bills before we make agreements, because sometimes they play tricks. Is it a fact that the Prime Minister, in a press conference prior to the week of April 1, indicated that the government would not introduce this legislation unless it was re-elected again?

Mr. Trudeau: No, Mr. Speaker; I believe I told the press conference what I have just told the hon. member, that if we have time to pass it, we will pass it. That is why I am making the offer to the hon. member.

An hon. Member: We have all the time to pass it.

Mr. Dick: Introduce the bill.

Mr. Trudeau: What is all the beefing about, Mr. Speaker? One member asks a question and another member is beefing about something. I do not know what he is beefing about.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Oral Questions

Mr. Dick: I would have liked to pose a final supplementary question.

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SMALL BUSINESS

PROTEST AGAINST DECISION TO SELL SACCHARIN ONLY IN DRUGSTORES

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of State for Small Business. In view of the fact that products containing saccharin and other sugar substitutes are to be sold only in drugstores by decree of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, considering that this practice greatly discriminates against small rural businesses which traditionally have stocked such products, and further noting that many rural inhabitants are unable to drive the 20 miles or 30 miles to the closest drugstore, will the minister confer with his colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, and end this unfair and arbitrary discrimination against rural business establishments and rural dwellers?

Hon. A. C. Abbott (Minister of State (Small Business)): Mr. Speaker, without knowing the facts, I presume there must be some prescription sale of saccharin now which did not exist before. But I will check with the Minister of National Health and Welfare to see if it can be ameliorated.

Mr. Darling: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that answer. He is well aware that a great many small municipalities of 200 or 300 people have no stores within 20 or 30 miles other than the general store. Will the minister give the further assurance that steps will be taken in respect of providing research and development grants to small firms previously engaged in manufacturing products containing saccharin which have been adversely affected by the government's decision and may want to establish new product lines? The minister is well aware of this because he visited one such establishment in my constituency where the municipalities are suffering from this situation.

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I will take that as a representation as well.

LOANS FROM FEDERAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of State for Small Business. More than six weeks ago he gave an undertaking to the House that he would favour removing the penalties which are currently assessed against small businessmen who have loans with the Federal Business Development Bank for prepayment of such loans before they are due. Why has he not yet acted on that undertaking, and when does he intend to do so?