

Oral Questions

● (1442)

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the preamble completely. I might inform the House, also, that Statistics Canada is working on a new formula for the consumer price index which I hope to be able to announce. I might say, also, that we were asked to devise a new formula for the consumer price index by the Premier of Ontario and by the Premier of Alberta at the first ministers' conference, and this was agreed upon by all first ministers at that conference.

Mr. McGrath: May I ask the minister if it is the intention of the government to ask Statistics Canada not to proceed with its plan to change the base rate in the consumer price index from the 1971 dollar to the 1974 dollar, which again, of course, will give the false impression that this government has inflation under control?

Mr. Horner: I think that today Statistics Canada is using a formula devised in 1969. We intend to update that.

* * *

HEALTH AND WELFARE**MINISTER URGED TO RECONSIDER BAN ON SACCHARIN**

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that the head of the health protection branch who precipitated the arbitrary and total ban of cyclamate in the summer of 1970, claiming that cyclamate was carcinogenic, this action causing severe damage to Canadian independent business, and since the same spokesman stated just last week that the great preponderance of world evidence indicates that cyclamate does not produce cancer, would the minister reconsider the competence of that person and the authenticity of his alleged science which led to the current precipitous ban of saccharin, using the identical claim, and even the same words, relative to the cyclamate ban eight years ago?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I know that moving saccharin from grocery store shelves to pharmacies has created some hardship, which we are trying to eliminate as soon as possible by bringing in new artificial sweeteners which are not damaging. I know that it also reopened the whole question of cyclamates, but I should like to confirm to my colleague, as well as to other members of the House, that we review and update scientific knowledge on that subject regularly.

The cyclamates which were used together with saccharin in previous artificial sweeteners and which were thought at that time to be a possible cause of cancer have now been identified as a separate element which does not cause cancer. I think it is unfair to make the assumption she made in the preamble to her question. The state of knowledge in the area is being constantly perfected and, as the government, we must act on

[Mr. McGrath.]

what we know and as everyone would agree we must take a calculated risk in order to protect the health of Canadians.

* * *

FINANCE**FEDERAL METHOD OF DEALING WITH QUEBEC SALES TAX CUTS**

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the right hon. Prime Minister: it relates specifically to the sales tax matter in general and the province of Quebec in particular. When this matter first came up and our party supported the proposition put forward by the Quebec minister of finance, we were accused of encouraging separatism.

The question I put to the right hon. Prime Minister today is: Why is his government, with one policy for Quebec and another policy for the rest of Canada in reality, encouraging the two solitudes and not only encouraging but practising separatism?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to his question the hon. member suggests that his party wanted us to follow Mr. Parizeau and give the money to Mr. Parizeau, the finance minister of the province of Quebec. Today we have been hearing a series of questions from the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands saying we should give the money to the poor people. Obviously, within a matter of a week the Tory party has flip-flopped. First they want to go to Parizeau and now they want to go to the poor.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Serge Joyal is not laughing.

Mr. Trudeau: As to the question itself, Mr. Speaker, about treating the country differently, I repeat what the Minister of Finance said to the Leader of the Opposition. Obviously, the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi does not understand what is being done. In the case of every province, including the province of Quebec, what this scheme involves is giving tax room to the provinces. We did this in the budget on budget night by giving tax room to every province so that they could occupy that tax room. We have done just the same thing for the province of Quebec. We have given it tax room so it could occupy it. It is the same thing for all the provinces.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Grafftey: I wonder if that includes the province of Alberta.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!