

Standing Order 43 concerning the Vancouver fireboat situation.

I want to ask the minister if he is aware that the fireboat service will be cut off at the end of this year unless funds additional to those provided by the city of Vancouver are found. Is it the intention of the government to provide funds for the fireboat in the Vancouver harbour? If not, how will the minister see to the protection of federal government assets which are located in the port of Vancouver?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the position of the National Harbours Board, which is the party involved in this debate, is that the municipality must provide these services. The National Harbours Board pays grants in lieu of taxes for that purpose, among others. This view is shared by a great number of people at the port of Vancouver, so we stand on that as being reasonable.

* * *

HEALTH AND WELFARE

HEALTH HAZARDS IN CERTAIN CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In a letter written on January 25, 1980, the chairman of the Federal Committee on Pesticides stated, and I quote: "The validity of all studies carried out by Industrial Biotest Laboratories of Northbrook, Illinois, remains in doubt". He further stated that "government officials found serious problems which were not identified or reported."

In light of the fact that over 90 chemicals and pesticides tested by this company are now in common use across the country, and in light of the fact that these materials may pose a serious threat to the health of Canadians, would the minister explain, after three years of study, what the defects in these chemicals and pesticides are and what are the health hazards; and is she prepared to make public the list of the chemicals involved and their particular health hazards?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I take for granted that the House will permit me to use written notes to make sure I give precise information on this very complex subject. Incidentally, I am also preparing a press release—I am working on it today—to inform the public on the state of the matter.

The situation is partly as the hon. member said, namely, that many pesticides, about 100, were tested for safety both by us and by Americans in a laboratory called Industrial Biotest Laboratories, and the tests were judged invalid. The job of validating all the tests is very long and I must inform hon. members that to complete the job will take another four years.

We have already found that eight of the 100 pesticides have been assessed as free of further concerns. The information presented to me as Minister of National Health and Welfare is such right now that I have no evidence today, based on all the work done—but incomplete—of serious negative effects on

Oral Questions

people. It is quite a complicated situation for a minister to make a decision on as to recommending to my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, a ban or no ban at this point in time on these pesticides. I will give further information in the form of a press release to everybody in Canada. I think that is the best channel we have. Then we can continue the discussion.

* * *

● (1500)

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

DE-INDEXING OF INCOME TAX—EFFECT ON LOW-INCOME CANADIANS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, a moment ago the Minister of Employment and Immigration stated that the government's goal was to use "its scarce revenues to help those most in need." I wonder if the minister will tell the House of Commons how that goal is advanced by a proposal to de-index the personal income tax.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition has already had more than a complete answer from other ministers of the Crown to exactly the same question.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: My supplementary question is to the Minister of State for Social Development. We have now been told by the Minister of Finance that he might, or might not, introduce—but he is at least seriously considering—de-indexation of the personal income tax system, which would increase taxes for Canadians earning \$10,000 a year by 180 per cent over five years.

The Minister of State for Social Development says he has not been consulted on this matter, that it is of no concern to him. Obviously it is of concern to him. My question to the minister is this. Since the Minister of Finance has indicated that he is considering a proposal which would increase by 180 per cent personal income taxes by Canadians in the lowest taxable bracket in the country, is the Minister of State for Social Development now making contingency plans which would help those Canadians whom the Minister of Finance proposes to hurt, and will the Minister of State for Social Development tell the House of Commons, either now or on motions this week, what the contingency plans are?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I said in a previous answer that this matter is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition will get an answer to his question on the evening of the budget speech. He should wait until then.