

Oral Questions

National Health and Welfare who was here, but has disappeared. Perhaps I could ask it when he comes back.

* * *

FINANCE

AVAILABILITY OF REPORTS ON TAX CONCESSIONS TO MANUFACTURING AND PROCESSING INDUSTRIES AS WELL AS WAGE INCREASES AND PRODUCTIVITY PRIOR TO BUDGET

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo-Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, may I direct my question to the Minister of Finance? It concerns the budget and the availability of certain documents before the budget date, documents which would allow members of this House to evaluate that budget. On May 14 my colleague, the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville, asked the Minister of Finance to account for the four and a half month delay in the tabling of the final report on tax concessions to manufacturing and processing industries and to give the House some idea when the report will finally be tabled. The Minister replied in part, as recorded on page 5,779 of *Hansard*:

The report is now in its final stages and I am advised the committee expects the report to be ready for tabling within a month.

As the minister recently postponed another important statement to this House, can he tell us when the report will be tabled and assure members that it will be available before the date of the budget?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I must obtain up-to-date information on the status of the report before I can give any undertaking.

Mr. Saltsman: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister table the document or report to which he referred and about which I questioned him yesterday, the report or studies showing those industries in which excessive wage increases are threatening Canada's competitive position? In the alternative, by what other means does he propose providing that information to the House. Further, is he prepared to assure the House that this information will be available prior to the budget?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, as I said to the hon. gentleman yesterday, I will review whatever commitment I may or may not have made and be in touch with him and the House.

Mr. Saltsman: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Are we to take it from the minister's statement that not one of the studies and documents which are the basis of the budget proposals is available; because, certainly, our ability to consider intelligently what is in the budget will depend on what is in those reports? Is the minister suggesting they will not be available to us before budget time?

Mr. Baldwin: The minister does not know what is in the budget yet.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): No, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

[Translation]

HEALTH

GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PREVENT SALE OF MEAT UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

The minister has stated that he was aware of the situation with respect to meat unfit for human consumption in Quebec as early as October 1973. I would like to ask him why he did not act under the Food and Drugs Act as the minister responsible for the health of the Canadian people and thus prevent the sale of contaminated meat in Quebec?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I will merely repeat the answers given in that connection last week. In October 1973, an inspector of my Department undertook an investigation only from hearsay because there was no actual fact enabling to go any further. However, as soon as there were enough indications to notify the police force concerned, this was done.

[English]

ACTION OF MINISTER TO COMMUNICATE WITH QUEBEC MINISTRY CONCERNING SALE OF MEAT UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Last week, in the House, the minister said there has not been any correspondence on this subject with any minister in Quebec. When the minister first learned about putrid meat in Quebec what, if anything, did he communicate to the Quebec minister of agriculture or the officials of his department about this shocking situation; and, why did he not issue some statement to notify Quebecers that after they have gone shopping they might be eating tainted meat?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the officials of my department have undertaken an inquiry. An extremely complex and difficult police investigation was in progress; it was important that this investigation should follow its course. Police authorities were responsible for this. There was no evidence enabling us to make specific allegations at any time, before the police investigation was concluded. And there has been, in fact, no oral or written communication between myself and Quebec ministers in this regard. However, the Quebec police force and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were involved in this investigation and, as a matter of fact, they have carried it out completely following the request made by one of the officials of my department.

[English]

Mr. Stanfield: Did the minister seek any assurance from the province of Quebec that it would immediately institute proper inspection proceedings where there is not federal inspection? In view of what is now public knowl-