

SOCIAL SECURITY

EXCLUSION OF ORPHANS FROM ELIGIBILITY FOR FAMILY ALLOWANCES—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION TO REINSTATE

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, a year ago last March I raised a question with the Minister of National Health and Welfare about the regulations in the Family Allowances Act taking orphans off the family allowances list. At that time the minister promised to do something about it. I have raised the matter three or four times since then, and I should like to ask the minister now how long he feels it will take him to persuade the civil servants that the view of parliament should prevail and that all children under 16 should receive the universal family allowance?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the problem is not how long it takes to give instructions to civil servants. I have to act according to the law and the regulations which have been passed under that law. What is required is an amendment to the regulations and there are also substantial financial implications in such a change that are being considered by the cabinet.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Do I understand the minister to say that even though he promised to make these changes in the regulations a year ago it has taken this long to persuade the cabinet to make such a simple moral type of alteration?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of time. It is a question of the finances involved.

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PRAIRIE FARM ASSISTANCE ACT

REQUEST FOR DELAY IN REPEAL OF ACT UNTIL INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES COMPLETED

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the government House leader. In view of the fact that four months have passed since the Minister of Agriculture was questioned about reported irregularities in the operation of the Prairie Farm Assistance Act during his term of office and that the House leader has said Bill C-30 which would repeal the said act will go before the House today, and in view of the fact that the RCMP investigation might not be completed for some time, would the government House leader agree to withhold Bill C-30 at least until the report on the investigation has been submitted?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is much connection between the two. I think it is desirable to repeal the act. The other inquiries can go ahead when the minister's estimates are before the committee and, of course, on the debate on the repeal the various points of view can be expressed.

Oral Questions
SOCIAL SECURITY

SUGGESTED INCREASE IN OLD AGE PENSIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Is the minister considering a substantial increase in the old age pension in order to stimulate the purchasing power of senior citizens and enable them to overcome the crushing financial burden that inflation has brought upon them?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): No, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

REQUEST FOR DELAY OF MEASURE TO INCREASE MEMBERS' SALARIES UNTIL AFTER DECISION ON RESTRAINT TARGETS FOR WAGE INCREASES

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and is based on his statement to my colleague the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville a few moments ago. He said that thus far he has given only a series of sketches and that the details of the blueprint are still being evolved. In view of the fact that the restraint targets with respect to wage and salary increases have yet to be arrived at, or are yet to be agreed upon, will the minister take whatever steps he can to urge the Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates to delay consideration of Bill C-44, to increase members' pay and allowances, until these targets have been achieved?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when the proposed increased figures are prorated over a period of years the question of the targets would be satisfactory within the discussions already contemplated by the various areas of the economy. In any event, the hon. gentleman will undoubtedly have his own view to present.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that we do not yet know what the targets will be, does the minister not think that this parliament and the government should give leadership on this issue by waiting for those targets?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): We are giving leadership right across the country, Mr. Speaker. It is up to parliament to decide the immediate problem before us.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): How can the minister say that with a straight face?