

The *sub judice* rule which he invoked earlier today in the House does not apply, according to *Beauchesne's*, until trial stage. Given that this is the case, will the Minister here and now stand—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know the Hon. Member would want the Chair to make the rulings on procedure. It may well be that the question is out of order once a criminal prosecution has begun. The Hon. Member quotes *Beauchesne's*. It is, nonetheless, always within the prerogative of a Minister not to answer a question. If the Minister responds and says that in the opinion of the Crown, the Minister, or the Government, because of an investigation it would be inappropriate to answer, one can argue as to whether the Minister is right or wrong, but that is the position that the Minister has taken and I cannot force the Minister to answer that question no matter what citations may exist in *Beauchesne's*.

I only say this because, in view of the subject matter and the vigorous questioning, all Hon. Members, and the public who are watching, should understand the procedural laws of which I have to remind Members from time to time.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a very specific question of the Minister of Public Works. The letter was sent to him on August 5, 1988. When did he receive the letter? Was it that date, was it shortly thereafter? What did he do with the letter? Did it give it to the RCMP at that time or did he wait until last weekend to give it after it was raised in this House and it became a public issue?

Did the Government act to do what was proper or did it only act once it got to the attention of the media? Is that what the Minister waited for?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member indicated that he wrote to me on July 4. The records of my Department indicate that we have never received such a letter.

Further, when I did—

Mr. Boudria: Harvie, you should consider that an insult.

Mr. McInnes: Would the Hon. Member like an answer to his question?

When I received the letter some time in August I immediately reviewed it. There was nothing in there that indicated to me that it should be turned over to the RCMP. Subsequently other oral statements by people have suggested that it would be appropriate to send it to the RCMP. There is nothing in the letter indicating that I should have put it to the RCMP or anything of that kind.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TABLE LETTER

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, the Minister has partially answered by telling us that he originally did not give the letter to the RCMP. He has now told us that he did not do it at that time.

Oral Questions

Is he prepared to do two things; one, tell us the exact date on which he chose to give it to the RCMP—we now know it was not at the beginning—and, second, will he undertake to ask for the consent of the House immediately after Question Period to table the letter here today?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Member was absent for the first part of Question Period. I indicated that because there was an ongoing inquiry by the RCMP, and that this was part of the record, it was difficult for me to comment.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

INCREASED DRUG DISPENSING FEES

Mr. Reginald Stackhouse (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Many consumers are concerned by rising prescription costs which seem to be due to dramatic increases, not in the costs of drugs but in the dispensing fees.

For example, one constituent in Scarborough West reports that the prescription cost was so divided that the drugs represented only 22 per cent of the total cost while 78 per cent was for the fee alone.

In view of so many consumers being of limited means but having no choice but to purchase prescriptions, what action can be taken to protect consumers against these impossible fees for service?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is not very much action available to us at the federal level in that prescription fees and the cost of dispensing, indeed the retail sale of drugs, are totally within provincial government jurisdiction. My advice to this Member and other Members is to refer this matter to the appropriate provincial Government.

The wholesale manufactured cost of patent drugs is now under the purview of the Drug Prices Review Board and, as indicated, those prices will be kept at less than the cost of living unless there are other circumstances which dictate a higher price in a specific case. We can control or examine the manufacture price of drugs although retail price is under provincial jurisdiction.

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PUBLIC WORKS

SALE OF MOISIE RADAR BASE—REQUEST THAT OFFICIAL'S LETTER BE MADE PUBLIC

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works and has to do with