

Mr. Grafftey: Since there is general agreement at this stage that low income people will be primarily hurt by the restraint program, will the hon. gentleman assure the House that these social programs will not be cut until there is elimination of waste along the lines I have suggested?

Mr. Speaker: That is exactly the question the hon. member has just asked and which was answered by the minister.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

APPLICATION FOR GRANT FOR CROCUS FOODS—DATE OF APPROVAL—REQUEST FOR TABLING OF RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In view of the application Manitoba has made for the funding of approximately \$2 million for a whey plant at Selkirk to be known as Crocus Foods, may I ask whether the minister has approved the application, or, if he has not, whether he will make public all the documents related to this project since the milk producers of Manitoba are not in favour of it.

● (1150)

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I must assure the hon. member that we did study this report lately. I think we will be in a position to announce our views on that particular subject in a few weeks.

[English]

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's answer that the file is presently being studied, will he give an undertaking or an assurance that he will also be consulting with various elected members of this House in respect of the program and the representations they have received from their constituents?

[Translation]

Mr. Lessard: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member there has been consultation and that we did indeed receive representations from several hon. members. When we have reached a decision and the hon. member has been advised of it, if he then feels that the decision is unfair, he can then keep on asking questions.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

OLD AGE PENSIONS—REASON FOR REDUCTION IN PENSION OF SPOUSE RECEIVING WELFARE

Mr. Jacques Lavoie (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the right hon. Prime Minister in view of the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Oral Questions

As the people of 65 and over have just had their pensions increased because of the cost of living indexation, as a result of which their spouses who are on welfare see their old age security benefits decreased, would the Prime Minister tell the House whether the government is willing to discuss that situation with the authorities of the province of Quebec with a view to righting that injustice?

[English]

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, we have always been prepared to discuss any such matters with counterparts in the province of Quebec.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

FAILURE OF FRANCE TO INVITE CANADA TO ECONOMIC SUMMIT MEETING—ALLEGED RELIANCE ON OTHER COUNTRIES TO PRESENT CANADA'S CASE

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I have now had an opportunity to examine closely the replies given by the Secretary of State for External Affairs yesterday to questions raised by the right hon. member for Prince Albert, from which it is clear that our ambassador in Paris, the former Minister of Communications, has so far failed to communicate, not on bended knee, as he suggested, but with head erect, stating Canada's case, as our right to attend such a conference. Therefore, my questions are these. Is it now Canada's policy to rely on intermediaries such as the United States, Germany, Britain and Japan, as he mentions here, to state our case, or are we prepared to make our own? Does he not construe from this recent turn of events that this is evidence that the success being claimed by this government in its efforts to improve relations between France and Canada is really pretty much of a failure?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to clear up one point. It was not I who suggested the bended knee, it was the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert who introduced that colourful expression to the discussion. We are not relying on others to make the case for us, although we appreciate their assistance. In respect of the representations that have been made by other countries, there is obviously involved a question as to whether the host country has the right to decide the membership of the meeting, quite apart from the wishes of those others who may attend.

Mr. Baldwin: Like with the PLO.

Mr. MacEachen: I suggest there is quite an important issue involved for countries like the United States and the United Kingdom in that point, in addition to the desirability of Canadian representation at the summit conference. We have already made our wishes clear to the French government through our representative in Paris. We believe we are entitled to be present at that summit on our own particular merits and not because other countries want us there. We believe we have a contribution to make.