

HEALTH

GENETIC ENGINEERING RESEARCH—REASON FOR LACK OF GUIDELINES—POSSIBILITY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of its inherent danger to the public interest, and in view of the fact that the United States has had guidelines regarding the control of genetic engineering research since last July and the British have had these guidelines since last August, would the minister explain why similar guidelines do not exist in this country until this day?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, several committees have made detailed studies and, at the present time, a committee—

[*English*]

The committee has submitted its report. The Medical Research Council is accepting the recommended guidelines concerning the handling of recombinant DNA molecules and viruses. The press release will be released some time today, or tomorrow at the latest.

Mr. Yewchuk: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that in addition to public institutions doing research of this kind private institutions are also doing it, and more research into genetic engineering could be expected to be undertaken by private institutions if it should become profitable, I would therefore like to know whether it is the intention of the minister to put forward legislative action of some sort to ensure that all aspects of this type of research are subject to the guidelines which might be proposed?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, we are indeed examining this particular situation in order to determine whether legislation is actually required or whether it can be done under regulations existing at the present time.

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POST OFFICE

SALE OF CANADIAN PHILATELIC MATERIAL AT DISCOUNT PRICES—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Postmaster General. Some time ago I asked the Postmaster General about the sale of certain Canadian philatelic material at discount prices in New York and he stated that he intended to give the House some information as well as some explanation which may be suggested by this question. I would ask him whether he is now ready to answer that question. In addition, since the 30 per cent discount given to foreign dealers in Canadian stamps results in windfall profits on stamp issues which sell out rapidly, would the government reconsider this policy of discounting stamps to foreign dealers?

Oral Questions

Hon. J. -J. Blais (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, after this matter was brought to my attention I did conduct an investigation and sales have been conducted in a way I could not approve. The practice has now been discontinued.

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COMMUNICATIONS

CONFERENCE OF PROVINCIAL MINISTERS—PROPOSAL THAT MEMBERS OF OPPOSITION ATTEND AS OBSERVERS

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a further question to the Minister of Communications in light of the minister's answer yesterday about the conference in the west next month. Knowing the gracious minister is always open to constructive suggestions and in order to underline seriously the ecumenical nature of this conference, and since it is not a federal-provincial conference as the minister said yesterday, would she give serious consideration to having spokesmen from the opposition parties in the House attend that communications conference as observers because, as the minister said yesterday, the goal of the conference is to discuss various problems and to try to come up with some coherent policy? There has been a precedent for this at some of the earlier federal-provincial conferences.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, the meeting in Edmonton would have been far more ecumenical had Mr. O'Neill agreed to take part in it. Still, it retains its consultative aspect which has become essential in the field of communications.

The communications ministers meeting in a federal-provincial conference had agreed to set up a ministers of communications council where, contrary to what happens at federal-provincial meetings, no firm decisions are made on the topics discussed. The council is therefore a forum in which the ministers can discuss the general communications policy and matters of common interest.

[*English*]

Mr. Roche: Mr. Speaker, since the government House leader has again denied the unanimous consent necessary to pass the motion of the hon. member for St. John's East, which would have the entire House join the worldwide demand for an investigation into the murder of the Anglican archbishop and two other officials in Uganda, even though this side of the House gave a formal assurance that there would be no debate—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Surely the hon. member realizes that the singling out of any member who has withheld his consent in respect of any proceeding in the House which requires unanimous consent is perhaps itself a cause for a point of order. If there is a serious point of order in what the hon. member has to say, I would be glad to hear it.