

been completed and who had not been cross-examined by any of the other solicitors. It seems to me that that is a very unwise procedure in the House of Commons, and certainly it would be unwise for me to comment upon what the hon. member describes as sworn testimony which to my knowledge may not yet be completed.

The hon. member's first question was based upon the premise that an investigation, as I understood it, had been ordered by the government into political parties of this country, or a political party. I want to assure the hon. member that that is not the case and never has been.

* * *

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

REASON FOR NOT LEASING BUILDING ON YORK STREET

Mr. Robert de Cotret (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister responsible for the National Capital Commission I would like to direct my question to the President of the Treasury Board, since he controls the purse-strings.

In light of the fact that the government's \$6 million investment on York Street, in Ottawa, is costing Canadian taxpayers approximately \$60,000 a month in carrying charges, can the minister explain whether there has been any progress in the move toward leasing this building, a building which has been sitting empty for at least two years? If so, are the terms of the lease now contemplated in any manner different from the terms of the public tender which was let over a year ago?

Hon. Judd Buchanan (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, that is a question to which I do not have a detailed response. I suggest the hon. member should wait and direct it to the appropriate minister.

Mr. de Cotret: Mr. Speaker, I will ask a more general question about the basic principle here. Can the minister give assurances to this House that the full cost of the development at 10-12-18 York Street, in Ottawa, including not only development costs, the cost of rare wines and tapestries and other imported antiques, but also those of interest and other carrying charges will be fully recovered and that no public moneys will be used to subsidize in any way the planned commercial development of that property? That is a question of principle and basic policy.

Mr. Buchanan: Mr. Speaker, again that question should be addressed to the appropriate minister. I am not sure whether this falls under the program of Demonstration Projects which comes within the ambit of Urban Affairs. I know there are certain programs across this nation under which heritage buildings and buildings of that nature are preserved. Under such programs it is not always possible to secure full economic rent. For this and other purposes it is judged that certain buildings should be preserved. Whether that pertains in this case, I do not know, but I reiterate that the question should be addressed to the appropriate minister.

Oral Questions

HEALTH AND WELFARE

REQUEST THAT BAN ON SACCHARIN BE RECONSIDERED

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. No other country in the world except Holland has considered rat tests to be sufficient to warrant a ban on saccharin. Smoking and coffee consumption are also suspected causes of bladder cancer, and both are practised more than saccharin use. Saccharin poses no known hazard to human health and, in fact, provides relief to the diabetic.

Will the minister explain why the decision of a handful of bureaucrats has successfully created an aura of suspicion and mistrust to convince the minister to take the harsh decision to ban saccharin, and is the minister willing to review the decision and make an announcement in the near future?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. The premise of the hon. member's question is erroneous and misleading to the public. A handful of Canadian bureaucrats did not make a decision out of the blue sky. The decision was made after a thorough study of scientific reports available to the western world. That was the basis of the Canadian decision close to two years ago. A commission of European communities recently confirmed that the way Canada handled the saccharin question to protect the Canadian public was the best way, given the state of knowledge at that time.

Mr. Darling: Mr. Speaker, I just want to confirm that Canada is still the only country which has banned saccharin. While the minister is reconsidering her decision, which I presume has already been made, would she take into consideration the fact that a large number of Canadians living in rural areas are inconvenienced by having to travel to distant drug stores to obtain products containing saccharin?

Does the minister not agree that the policy should be to label the contents of products, and not ban saccharin, thereby leaving the ultimate choice of product and price to the Canadian people? The so-called protective benevolence of the government has reached an aggressive level.

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, the only answer I will give to that convoluted question is that saccharin is known to cause cancer. Studies of other products which may eventually replace saccharin will continue. Incidentally, saccharin has not been banned; it has been restricted to pharmaceuticals. It is available in pharmacies and is controlled. That is what we have done in Canada. The purpose of the Department of National Health and Welfare and the Food and Drugs Act is, surely, to protect Canadians from suspected hazards and risks, and that is what we have done.