

Oral Questions

My question is for the Prime Minister. Did the Minister of Justice do this on his own? Was he directed to do so by the Prime Minister's office?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member I hope in good standing of the Canadian Bar Association, I would want to explain to my hon. colleague that people have come before the Senate committee to discuss the issue of Pearson. Although I may disagree with them on some issues, we recognize the credibility of the group that came before the Senate to make its position known with respect to the constitutionality of Bill C-22.

It is highly irregular, if not totally improper, for the hon. member to come before the House and to suggest that members of the Canadian bar have been coerced by the government or anybody else. The hon. member should be aware that there are conflicting opinions on this, but certainly nobody has tried to manipulate the Canadian Bar Association. Had we done that, we would not have got the kind of testimony we got in the first instance with respect to the constitutionality of Bill C-22.

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[Translation]

BOVINE SOMATOTROPIN

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

If the use of somatotropin is authorized in Canada, consumers will demand that the milk produced using this hormone be labelled to distinguish it from unadulterated milk. Our children have the right to drink real milk with no hormones.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that if Health Canada authorizes the sale of somatotropin, either of two things will happen: citizens will either be confronted with a done deed and will have no choice but to consume the milk produced with the synthetic hormone, or they will have to pay more for the milk they are used to drinking in order to fund the cost of keeping two separate distribution networks for milk?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister explained yesterday that no decision has been made on the issue, that the moratorium is voluntary, and that, on July 1, the Department of Health will not be in a position to authorize the sale of this hormone to Canadian consumers.

The hon. member apparently made the suggestion that we should inform consumers if the use of the hormone is going to be allowed. But this is a purely hypothetical question, because the

government has not made any decision yet regarding whether it will be authorized, if it ever is at all.

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly excuse the Prime Minister for not being up to date on the issue. But, in fact, if Health Canada gives its approval, agriculture will need two years to set up a system. That is why the agriculture committee, in addition to the health committee, this morning, demanded an indeterminate ban on this substance.

Given that this is the last question we will be able to ask on the issue, I am going to ask the Prime Minister a genuine question, a simple question. Why must our children drink anything other than real milk, with no artificial hormones added?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is that, in Canada, at the current moment, the milk children are drinking has no artificial hormones. Artificial hormones are banned in Canada, and that is the current situation. If there is any change in the situation, we will inform the House and we will take appropriate measures. But, at this time, all of these questions are purely hypothetical because the hormones in question are not authorized for use in Canada.

The hon. member just said that this was the last time he would be asking a question. I hope that they are not going to devote all their efforts to the referendum and stop doing the work required of an MP. If they do, I hope they will give back their salaries.

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[English]

SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question concerns the minister of public works. A recent government report shows that a federal program to direct \$1.5 billion a year in federal contracts to small business may not be necessary because this sector already gets its fair share of government business.

Could the minister advise the House on the relevance of the report and what changes the minister plans on implementing?

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has a strong commitment to small business in the country. The small business report to which the member refers confirms that 32 per cent of government services contracts are given to small businesses.

• (1450)

However, over the last few months a consultation process has been initiated with major industries, aboriginal businesses and political groups across the country on the desirability of having a set aside program. Preliminary reports show a clear message that we do not need a set aside program for small businesses as they can compete with larger industries. In contrast, the set aside