

HEALTH ASPECTS

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, on December 14 the Prime Minister stated in the House, and I quote with care:—the health and safety of people take precedence over everything else.

Why did he agree to allow the savage cuts to the Environmental Secretariat, particularly to the projects which are directed to evaluate the effects of viruses, heavy metals, and toxic materials on the health of the 40 million North Americans who drink from the Great Lakes?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am assured that no cuts were introduced which would have that kind of dire impact upon anyone. But, as I indicated, the Minister will be back in the House tomorrow and I am sure that she will be able to satisfy any concerns which my hon. friend has.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF AGREEMENT SIGNED IN MONTREAL

Mr. Marcel R. Tremblay (Québec-Est): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion.

In Montreal last Friday, the Minister and the Quebec Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs signed an agreement on regional economic development, an important event that demonstrates the improvement that has taken place in relations between the Federal Government and the Government of Quebec. Could the Minister inform the House in what way this agreement differs from agreements signed with his counterparts in British Columbia and Ontario?

[English]

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the Hon. Member, I am sure all Members will understand that it is difficult in a short answer to explain the differences in a comprehensive way between British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec IRDA agreements. Perhaps it would suffice if I assured the Hon. Member that the agreement we signed with Quebec last Friday is one which anticipates extensive sub-agreements and funding to fall out therefrom. The total amount of new money over the next five years which is anticipated will be about \$630 million, which the Province of Quebec has agreed to match. That makes a total \$1.320 billion. In short, it is the finest such agreement which has ever been reached between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada, which the former Liberal Government was unable to do—

● (1450)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* * *

SOCIAL SECURITY

RELEASE OF WHITE PAPER

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, I believe Canadians are justified in their confusion, mainly because on this issue of universality there have been three positions taken by Hon. Members on the front bench opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Frith: Three positions. Is it the intention of the Government to wait until we recess this House on Friday before it releases the white papers on family allowances and old age pensions? Or will the Minister of Finance do the courageous thing and table the documents and those papers in the House tomorrow so that members of the Opposition can have the opportunity to question the direction the Tory Government wants to take, before we break for Christmas?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member will know that on July 26 he, the Hon. Member for Vancouver East, and myself appeared on a national television program in which it was said: "To sum up your position on the medicare question—"

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Epp (Provencher): "—and on the social welfare net, you seem to be saying, "No new money". You just want to look at the existing money and redistribute the existing money. No new money for either medicare or poverty programs". That was Mrs. Frum, and Mr. Frith said: "That's correct". Therefore, coming directly to what the Hon. Member has said, and what we have said—

Mr. Chrétien: What about the white paper?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: I regret to advise the Minister that I cannot hear the answer. The Hon. Member has a supplementary, perhaps. I could not hear the answer because of the noise in the House.

Mr. Frith: I will come back, Mr. Speaker, and ask the same question again. Is it the intention of the Government to wait until Parliament recesses before it has the courage to release its directional papers on family allowance and old age security? Why will the Government not table those documents here this week so that we can have the opportunity to debate them in this House?