

Oral Questions

days to look into this matter, can he say why there has been such an excessive increase in the price of skim milk powder?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member pointed out, he asked me that question about a week ago: I immediately referred it to the officials in my department, including the director of investigation in the combines bureau. They are investigating this matter. The hon. member made an allegation that there was profiteering in that particular business. That is now being investigated, but I do not have a report.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**ACCESS OF FORCE TO INCOME TAX RETURNS**

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General: it relates to the ongoing policies of the government regarding the confidentiality of income tax returns. Does it remain the government's policy to permit law enforcement officers access to confidential income tax returns in files of private citizens who are reasonably suspected of being involved in organized crime?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is very much aware of the terms of the agreement entered into between the Department of National Revenue and the Solicitor General. The terms are self-explanatory. Both the Department of National Revenue and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police comply very specifically with the terms of that agreement.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, the Solicitor General is aware that access is only permitted on the basis of a citizen being suspected of being involved in organized crime, the official definition of which is "two or more persons concerting together on a continuing basis to participate in illegal activities either directly or indirectly for gain." It has been pointed out in the McDonald commission that that could include a husband and wife conspiring together to cheat on an unemployment insurance claim.

In the area of access by law enforcement officers to confidential income tax files of those suspected of being involved in organized crime, is this rather broad definition used, or is a more restricted, pertinent definition of organized crime used to permit that access? If so, what is that more restricted definition?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member fully knows if he has read the proceedings before the McDonald inquiry, the definition was one suggested by counsel through a leading question. I can assure the hon. member that the definition relating to a husband and wife attempting to conspire to defraud the unemployment insurance system is not one which is of any interest to the RCMP.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, as the Solicitor General knows full well, that definition has been accepted by the minister and by

[Mr. Nystrom.]

the commissioner of the RCMP, in committee, as being the only official definition of organized crime. Is access being granted to confidential income tax returns on the basis of that definition? If not, on the basis of what definition is such access being given?

● (1427)

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows that the purpose of the agreement was to permit co-operation between National Revenue and the RCMP in order to prosecute offences under the Income Tax Act. That particular arrangement has been very successful in terms of the number of prosecutions undertaken. In terms of non-compliance with the Income Tax Act, there has, indeed, been information made available by the RCMP to National Revenue that permitted these prosecutions. Surely the hon. gentleman knows that the full purpose was to deal with individuals who are known to, or who are suspected of engaging in activities that come within the definition of organized crime as the hon. gentleman understands that definition.

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[Translation]

AIRPORTS**POSSIBILITY OF INSTALLING LANDING INSTRUMENTS AT EASTERN QUEBEC AIRPORTS**

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Transport.

Since it is important for eastern Quebec to have satisfactory air connections with the remainder of the province, and since the Gaspé and Magdalen Islands airports have no instrument landing facilities, as a result of which 15 to 20 per cent of flights are cancelled, does the minister intend to correct those conditions in the near future?

[English]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as earlier answers in this House to the two members of parliament from the areas of Gaspé and Bonaventure have indicated, we have this matter under active consideration. There are several solutions, including the possible use of Dash-7 aircraft, and certainly improved landing systems in the long run will be part of the improvement to the air system in the area. The complications at the moment include, in at least one case, the location of an ideal site for the airport. We hope to come to a conclusion on this matter at a fairly early date.

[Translation]

Mr. Allard: Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

Since the Dash-7 STOL aircraft seems to be a temporary solution for those two airports, does the minister intend to subsidize Quebecair for the purchase of a Dash-7 to improve