

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

MANPOWER**SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS**

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

Following his statement concerning the creation of 35,000 new summers jobs for students, can the minister indicate to the House whether this new policy will be permanent or only temporary?

[English]

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is a policy for this summer. I would not wish to predict what the appropriate policy might be for a future summer.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): In view of the lack of reference in the minister's statement today to the special problems affecting students in certain regions of Canada, would he instruct his department to give special attention to the needs of university students living in areas where economic disparity exists?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's question is in the form of a representation.

DRUGS**MEASURES TO DEAL WITH HIGH PRICES**

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Does the hon. gentleman agree with the conclusion of the joint parliamentary committee on high drug prices that the chief cause of the difficulty is at the retail level? If so, when does he intend to use the anti-combines legislation or other measures to deal with this problem?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I am not sure that the phrase used by the hon. member is a correct reflection of the recommendation of the Harley report which recommended that action be taken on several fronts. In line with the recommendation of the Harley committee we are, as the hon. member knows—he asked a question about this yesterday—holding meetings today with provincial officials to discuss certain aspects of the distribution of pharmaceutical products at the retail level. I am surprised that the hon. member does not

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

know that action under the Combines Investigation Act was taken some months ago in British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I notice that several members are rising to ask supplementaries, but again I would request the co-operation of hon. members in an effort to curtail the number of supplementary questions asked between now and the end of the question period.

Mr. Dinsdale: A very brief supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In light of the minister's answer, is it fair to conclude that he is now delegating his responsibility for the control of drug prices to the provincial governments?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Later:]

CROWN CORPORATION TO MANUFACTURE AND DISTRIBUTE—ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION EXPENSES

Mr. David Lewis (York South): May I ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs a question which is related to one addressed to him a few moments ago? In view of the minister's justified concern about the high prices of prescription drugs, and in view of certain statements he is reported to have made, will he inform the House whether he intends proposing to the cabinet the establishment of a Crown corporation for the manufacture and distribution of prescription drugs to the end that drug prices might be reduced?

Mr. Basford: I am also reported as having said that, for the moment at least, I have rejected that solution.

Mr. Lewis: I had hoped that overnight the minister had become wiser. I regret being disappointed. I should also like to ask the minister whether he would consider discussing with the Minister of Finance the possibility of amending the Income Tax Act so as to place limits on the allowable expenses which large pharmaceutical concerns and wholesalers may put into promotion, advertising and the like?

Mr. Basford: As has been made clear, we have a five-point program to reduce the cost of drugs and we are meeting with the provinces at the present time in an effort to get some improvement made at the retail level. I believe it would be premature to adopt other measures until we have had a chance to see how effective existing measures are.