

Oral Questions

producers and is unable to bring in steel at a cheaper rate from offshore?

Mr. Lang: Well, Mr. Speaker, even allowing for the steel cost differential between—

Mr. Fraser: Yes or no?

Mr. Lang: No, in the sense that, even allowing for the differential in steel costs in that region compared to other regions, the price quoted by Rail West was considerably higher than the prices of other plants. We offered something above the differential, but that was the price Rail West was unable to meet.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of grave concern to a lot of people and I should like to ask this supplementary question. Can the minister then confirm that there are discussions going on between the government of British Columbia and his own department to see whether this particular operation can put in bids and possibly get some work in the coming months? The matter is very crucial for well over 200 people.

● (1450)

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, it is very much appreciated by both ourselves in this government and the provincial government that it is crucial. As a result, as I have said, those discussions are going on. I did meet with Mr. Phillips yesterday. Rail West did bid in relation to this order so it should be clear to the hon. member what has already happened. The provincial government indicated its interest in terms of looking at the total price picture at the time of a subsequent tender. We will obviously be looking at that question.

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HEALTH**POSSIBILITY OF BANNING PRODUCTS IN ADDITION TO SACCHARIN THAT MAY BE DANGEROUS TO HEALTH**

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that excessive amounts of saccharin have been found dangerous to rats and it is to be banned for human consumption, and it should be noted that humans have built-in protection in that they would drown before contacting cancer using comparable amounts, will the minister advise the House whether we can expect his medical researchers to push ahead to ban chocolate, ice cream, cheese, liver, milk, eggs, coconut, sugar, salt and all other products that induce high cholesterol and heart disease to humans, even though we are not sure if it is safe for rats?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Holt: Further, will he also consider banning cars, also dangerous to humans although we have no statistics on rat mortality.

[Mr. Fraser.]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I want first to thank the hon. member for her useful contribution to this highly scientific debate. I invite her to look at the statements made by the officials of my department before the committee of the House considering the supplementary estimates of my department during the course of the last week. She will find a very worthwhile explanation of the whole study and will realize that, in particular, the World Health Organization put the safety level of one part per 5,000 as a minimum safety level while in this particular case we found cancer-producing agents at one part per 800. In that respect, the danger found in this case on the basis of those studies was indeed very real. I hope that consideration of this matter will be given in a scientific and responsible way and that people who are interested in further knowledge on the scientific aspects of this matter will come when my main estimates are considered next week, at which time my officials will be quite happy to provide further information on this subject to those who are interested.

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PUBLIC SERVICE**SALARY INCREASES FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVES—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of the Prime Minister's concern that Canadians not live beyond their means and in view of the government's desire to dampen the rising expectations of Canadians, will he reconsider the position he has taken during the question period today with reference to recommendations for salary increases for deputy ministers and others in high positions. In particular, will he take into account that the recommendation is that there be two increases, one retroactive to last April and another effective this April, the two of which amount to a considerable sum for persons who, like myself, are not starving?

Mr. Alexander: I don't know about that, Stanley.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): You sure look like it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member is misreading the report. It is not recommending a retroactive increase, certainly not the way I read it. It is indicating a range and moving the range in two periods of one each year. It is not recommending that the salaries go up this year after having gone up last year. On the contrary, the report recognizes there has been a one-year freeze of senior executives. It takes that into account. As I told the Leader of the Opposition, not many people in this country, certainly not the labour movement which are supported by the hon. member's party, have accepted a one-year freeze as did we in this House and public servants at the senior level.