

Oral Questions

Will the minister agree that enticing with extra dollars Canadians who are poor or broke to serve as subjects for human experimentation is unethical? If the answer is yes, why did the government permit it to happen? Will the Minister now put a stop to it?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, we believe that it is appropriate, before drugs are put on the market in Canada, that they be tested on volunteers. If the hon. member disagrees with that, he is certainly free to indicate that he is.

Does the hon. member believe, for example, it should be tested on people who are not volunteers? Second, does he not believe that people who are asked to give of their time and inconvenienced should be compensated for that? Is the hon. member aware of the fact that, in the case of the test for HI-6, it involves some five separate stays of up to 60 hours in order to have the tests conducted and have follow-up tests done? Does he not believe that it is appropriate, where people put faith in such studies, they should be compensated for their inconvenience?

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House believes that the drug must first be tested in human beings in a clinically-controlled fashion before it is placed on the market. We equally believe that compensation should be given, but given only for loss of time from work and to help with their meals, not as a bribe to poor Canadians.

Doctor Agnes Klein of the Health Protection Branch is quoted in today's issue of *The Calgary Sun*: "This is normal practice" referring to the fact that no animal testing for cancer with HI-6—

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, no testing had been done on animals before it was tested in humans.

Will the minister agree that the sequence of testing should be first on animals before human volunteers? Why has the minister got it backwards? Is he not concerned that even low doses of a carcinogen could produce irreversible damage in human beings?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the hon. member is suggesting that the compensation these individuals received for up to five stays of some 60 hours apiece, 300 hours of participation, was too high. If he believes that, he should say so.

The hon. member says that no studies have been done with regard to animals. There have been a succession of tests done by DND over the years since 1981. The program involved efficacy testing in seven animal species and one avian species: mouse, rat, guinea pig, dog, monkey, swine, and chickens. It also involved rats. It involved just about every species but rat packs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Beatty: It is based on all of the information. In addition to that, around the world over 120 persons in Sweden and Yugoslavia have had exposure to the drug. We are not aware of any danger to human beings as a result and we have reviewed all of the medical literature relating to it. We believe it was a safe test and we believe it was ethically conducted.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. David Bjornson (Selkirk—Red River): Mr. Speaker, I too like many others have asked some questions about GST and I would like to direct my question to the Minister of State for Finance.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am a small-businessman and I am actually looking forward to moving the federal taxation system from the MST to the GST. But, like many others, I come from a province that will have more than one taxation system. I would like to put this question to the minister. Is he and the Minister of Finance doing anything to harmonize the two taxation systems?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. gentleman for a very valid question.

For two years we have worked closely with the provinces to get them to agree to a national sales tax. Unfortunately, they were not very forthcoming. Now that the GST is virtually adopted, they are coming onstream. As you very well know, Mr. Speaker, the province of Quebec has announced a two-stage harmonization of its sales tax with the federal GST. Saskatchewan is currently negotiating with the federal government on the possibility of harmonizing, so we are heading in the right direction. I thank the hon. gentleman for his question.