

Oral Questions

about it in more detail than the Prime Minister has been able to give. Therefore, I should like to ask the Prime Minister this. Has a formal agreement yet been signed with the Syncrude consortium, and if so will it be tabled in the House immediately so that we can see this formulation of words, or is it still in the tentative stage and only letters of intent have been given? In addition, when a formal agreement has been signed, would the Prime Minister undertake that it will be tabled immediately in the House?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right in asserting that the people are very interested in the price, but they are more interested in what the international price is than in possible slight variations that the formulation permits. What world prices will be, of course, is something that I do not know and which I do not think the hon. member could assume either.

In reply to the second part of the question, I would have to defer to the minister who will be back in the House. I do not think a formal agreement was signed; I believe it was an exchange of intentions between gentlemen but I will have to find out.

* * *

AIR CANADA

SUGGESTED INQUIRY INTO OPERATIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister of Transport. In view of the fact that there has been an unusually high turnover of staff at the executive level of Air Canada since 1968 when Mr. Yves Pratte was first appointed chairman of the air line, and since the time of Mr. Pratte's appointment Air Canada has been plagued with widely publicized staff morale problems, which have adversely affected the operations of the air line to the point where its level of performance is no longer satisfactory to the travelling Canadian public, would the Prime Minister look into this very important matter and consider an inquiry into the operations of this Crown corporation and/or the replacement of Mr. Pratte?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I do not agree with the premises of the question, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

SUGGESTED DISCOUNT PLAN TO AID CONSUMERS

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

In view of the great success of the discounts or reimbursements offered by car manufacturers to help this stagnating industry, could he tell the House whether he intends considering the possibility of establishing such a discount program for various essential consumer prod-

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

ucts to stimulate the economy while providing Canadian consumers with the available products at more acceptable prices?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the question covers so many factors that a simple answer is impossible during the oral question period. I could perhaps give a more comprehensive reply in writing.

* * *

HEALTH

THALIDOMIDE VICTIMS—INQUIRY AS TO SETTLEMENTS

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

My question concerns thalidomide victims. Since the minister stated in this House a few months ago that the file was still open, could he tell us if there have been satisfactory settlements between thalidomide victims and the company responsible?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in April 1973, I stated that following discussions with Richardson-Merrell (Canada) Limited, this company had attempted to reach settlements in all cases of thalidomide victims still pending, which involved nearly exclusively people from Quebec. The company had promised settlements and asked the parents concerned to hire a legal adviser to come to agreements on this matter. I understand that some agreements have been made. However a certain number of cases were referred to American courts by the parents concerned. In those cases, there were of course no discussions while the issue was still pending before the American courts. But I read recently that now that the American courts have rejected the requests of Quebec parents, the Richardson-Merrell (Canada) Ltd. Company have agreed to undertake negotiations with the parents if they are interested.

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Since, as the minister stated, a Philadelphia court recognized at the end of December that the company was not responsible as concerns the prescribed time allowance which had expired, could the minister say whether he intends communicating with the legal advisers or the parents of the victims to promise them the services necessary to bring about a satisfactory settlement?

Mr. Lalonde: I shall be happy to do so, Mr. Speaker, but the company has already stated publicly, and this was reported in the newspapers, that it was even prepared to undertake negotiations with the parents whose cases were rejected by the American courts.

[English]

IMMIGRANT MEDICAL STUDENTS—REQUEST FOR DATA ON WILLINGNESS TO SERVE IN GENERAL PRACTICE AND IN REMOTE AREAS

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of National