

Oral Questions

questioning me today has been thoroughly discussed in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs of the House, and I have written to the hon. member confirming that the Americans have found that the rate of deviation from adherence to good investigation protocol is about 25 per cent, but in practice the rate of serious deviation is considered to be 10 per cent. The same type of deviation probably exists in our country, but mechanisms are in place to control that and to withdraw immediately products from the market with which we learn there are specific problems.

I have also assured the hon. member of the link we have with the United States respecting information on specific problems regarding certain chemicals, which is passed on to us as confidential information.

REQUEST FOR REVIEW OF TESTING PROCEDURES

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Madam Speaker, I appreciate what the minister is saying, but the minister also knows that an Oakville woman almost died because the Upjohn Company in the United States knew, five or six years before we in Canada did, that the particular drug she took caused serious side effects. It took five or six years after it was known in the United States for us to hear about it. Surely the minister must admit that the time is long overdue to re-examine the whole process of testing chemicals and their registration in Canada. Will she at least agree to a review of this whole process?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, the case concerning Clindamycin and the woman to whom the hon. member refers who almost died after taking this product, put on the market by the Upjohn Company, is at least 12 years old. All the facts were given to the hon. member in detail in a letter. Since that time changes have taken place in all procedures. I thought we had explained that.

Two problems remain. The hon. member wants every chemical to be fully assessed before it reaches the market. This is not the case in any country. I have explained often to the hon. member that I am not sure any country has found a solution to this problem. On the other hand, the hon. member, like many of us, presses for the eventual development of a project of great interest to Canada, and probably to western Canada in particular, namely, the development of one or more centres for toxicological studies here in Canada. That surely will be a very happy development, but in the meantime our procedures in Canada assure the safety of products for Canadians to the maximum extent possible.

AGRICULTURE

EFFECT OF HIGH INTEREST RATES—REQUEST FOR CHANGE IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BOND

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday in the House in answer to a question by the hon. member for Halton the minister stated that the change in the business development bond had made available \$100 million in loans to the agricultural community. He advised the CFA of this, but that federation advised him of the fact that in the period 1978-81 interest charges alone as a cost to agriculture rose by \$1.25 billion.

In view of the fact that the \$100 million represents 8 per cent of the three-year interest increment for agriculture, and represents less than 5 per cent of the total agricultural interest cost, would he now agree to adjust the business development bond so that he can use the word "significant" in a meaningful way when addressing himself to farmers, rather than assisting them with less than 5 per cent of their interest costs?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member misunderstood, obviously, the purpose of the Small Business Development Bond when it was initially introduced by the hon. member for St. John's West. It was never intended to achieve the purpose the hon. member now seems to think was its purpose. However, I am aware, as he is, that the impact of high interest rates is affecting a portion of the agricultural population of Canada in a very difficult way. It affects all, of course, but some are much more hard pressed than others, and it is to that group that the revisions of the small business bond were directed and the provision that was made in the last budget to make lower interest rates available through the Farm Credit Corporation. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture made some proposals at its meeting with me last week which I undertook to consider in conjunction with the problems the Federation laid out.

FARM CREDIT CORPORATION BORROWING AUTHORITY

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. The same document presented by the CFA made the statement that the FCC proportion of long-term lending is down from 70 per cent to less than 20 per cent of the farm requirement. In view of the authority recently granted to the Farm Credit Corporation to borrow money on its own, and in view of the total lack of concern and understanding of the Minister of Finance, would the Minister of Agriculture explain to this House how he plans to use the new borrowing capability of the FCC to provide money to the agricultural community at the 10 per cent interest level which the Federation feels is the maximum producers can afford to pay under existing economic circumstances imposed by the Minister of Finance?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture made a