

bill, but with reference to the white paper in which the guidelines are proposed. It is suggested that reductions in production costs are expected to be passed on to the consumer. If the board has no intention of monitoring general price increases, how does the government propose to enforce this requirement that reductions in costs be passed on to the consumer?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, while the board will obviously have to make some selections as to key sectors in which price increases will be of the greatest concern, it will be carrying on very extensive monitoring. It seems whether one is monitoring price increases or the absence of a price decrease, it is the same function. The board will indeed be carrying this out.

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● (1120)

[Translation]

SOCIAL SECURITY

SUGGESTED PROVISION OF ADEQUATE PENSION FOR INVALIDS UNDER AGE 65

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

The minister had indicated that a study had been undertaken with his provincial counterparts concerning a new federal-provincial agreement to secure an adequate income for the invalids who have not reached retirement age. Could the minister tell us now if the results of this study can be expected soon and whether he intends to make an early statement in the House on this matter?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the last federal-provincial conference on this subject, I tabled—if my memory serves me well—the press release which covers in part the point raised by the hon. member. Another federal-provincial conference will be held in late November or early December and I shall be happy to report to the House the result of the discussions that will have then taken place.

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[English]

HEALTH

SALE OF TAINTED MEAT TO QUEBEC CONSUMERS— GOVERNMENT ACTION TO IMPROVE INSPECTION SERVICE

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare as well. It deals with the distribution of tainted meat in the province of Quebec. In view of the charge made by the Quebec crime inquiry commission that the federal government has shown a lack of vigilance in protecting the consumer, has any action now been taken to increase the inspection services in order that the consumer will be properly protected?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the report referred to was made public only yesterday. I have not seen it. I did not get a copy, but I shall try to study it as soon as possible, and then answer the hon. member's questions.

Oral Questions

[English]

SALE OF TAINTED MEAT TO QUEBEC CONSUMERS— SUGGESTED AMENDMENT TO FOOD AND DRUGS ACT TO PUT BURDEN OF PROOF ON SELLER

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): For the edification of the minister, the report recommends that there be an amendment to the Food and Drugs Act to place the burden of proof on anyone charged with dealing in tainted meat, which is a departure from the present law. Has the minister given consideration to making such an amendment to the Food and Drugs Act?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as I have just said, I have not read the report and I should like to do so before answering. However, I am convinced that all members will have to do some serious thinking before changing the burden of proof, even in a case such as this, because it is a very serious matter in criminal law.

[English]

SALE OF TAINTED MEAT TO QUEBEC CONSUMERS—PROPOSED INQUIRY INTO CONDUCT OF INSPECTORS

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): In view of the suggestion in the report that the federal government had known about the distribution of tainted meat in the Province of Quebec for the past seven years, since 1968, would the minister agree to initiate a ministerial inquiry into the conduct of officers of his department, namely, the inspectors who had known about this situation, in order to determine why no action was taken until the Quebec inquiry made its revelations?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept any of the premises stated by the hon. member. If he has his own copy of the report, I should be very happy to read it, but I am not willing to accept his allegations.

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[English]

POST OFFICE

CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR MAIL DELIVERY IN EVENT OF STRIKE

Mr. R. E. McKinley (Huron-Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Postmaster General. Since, according to the news, government departments have made arrangements for the delivery of their mail and are ready in the event of a long strike by postal employees, I should like to ask the hon. gentleman what arrangements he has made for small business people to send and receive mail, for example, accounts, bills and cheques? What arrangements have been made to enable weekly newspapers to be despatched as well as mail by private individuals?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): It is normal that the government would set up contingency plans but I am not prepared to reveal them, particularly