

*Oral Questions*REASON NAMES, ADDRESSES AND SOCIAL INSURANCE  
NUMBERS GIVEN TO STATISTICS CANADA

**Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot):** Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Deputy Prime Minister. Given the situation that within a few blocks of this chamber 50 to 60 boxes are lying unattended which contain this confidential information, including tax information, where anyone can walk off the street and inspect it, and given the responsibility of the cabinet under section 23 of the Statistics Act wherein the cabinet sets conditions under which documents are given to Statistics Canada, can the Deputy Prime Minister explain why tax information would be delivered that would include names, addresses and social insurance numbers, when that information can be of absolutely no interest or assistance whatsoever to Statistics Canada in terms of its mandate?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I have already given assurances to the hon. member's colleague that I shall look into this matter.

**Mr. Jarvis:** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Prime Minister will recall that it was revealed not long ago that a previous minister of national revenue, now the Minister of Employment and Immigration wrote—out of concern, I am sure—to the then solicitor general, now the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, expressing concern about access to that type of confidential information by law enforcement officers.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House whether he is aware of any comparable concern by the present Minister of National Revenue in terms of delivery of confidential information to Statistics Canada and the methods of protecting that confidentiality which Statistics Canada supposedly exercises?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks me if I am aware of any concern held by the Minister of National Revenue along the lines expressed in a letter about which we are informed and about which lengthy discussions took place in this House. I am not aware of any discussions carried out by the Minister of National Revenue. He may have had them. He may feel this concern, but it certainly has not been conveyed to me in any way so that I can respond to the hon. member's question.

● (1420)

**Mr. Baldwin:** Look at the Official Secrets Act.

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## CONSUMER AFFAIRS

PROFIT INCREASES OF CORPORATIONS—INCREASES IN  
CONSUMER PRICES

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Considering that Statistics Canada figures released

[Mr. MacEachen.]

yesterday show that profit increases for the last quarter of 1978 went up 39 per cent, coming after earlier quarterly increases of 32 per cent, 18 per cent and 12 per cent, and considering that the minister said outside the House yesterday that the government would be prepared to use its purchasing policy and its powers in the marketplace to force companies to come into line in terms of having reasonable prices for Canadian consumers, I ask the minister to explain to the House precisely what he means by this.

Another question of equal importance is this: does the government intend to take immediate action to implement such a policy?

**Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, we cannot conclude that increased profits have been caused by price gouging, profiteering or anything like that. Increased profits may very well be due to increased efficiency, more sales, and so on.

**Mr. Gillies:** What about the falling dollar?

**Mr. Allmand:** Let me state, Mr. Speaker, that profit increases have historically heralded a general economic recovery and the hon. member should welcome that. Furthermore, our preliminary studies show that profit levels are not out of line with historical patterns for profits. Finally, there was a report released, I think today, that stated over the last four years wages and salaries have increased much more than profits.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Mr. Speaker, I rather suspected the minister would add that last statistic. If he does a little further research, he will find out that during the last ten years wages have gone up 141 per cent but profits—please note this, Mr. Minister—during the same decade increased by 240.8 per cent, almost twice the rate of wage increases over the past decade. It depends where you start the trend. It depends who your friends are, as well.

**Mr. Stevens:** Is that the four-fifths and the one-fifth?

**Mr. Broadbent:** Having regard to what the minister said about profit increases perhaps being due to increased sales, and considering the AIB report that came out yesterday on food industry profits at the retail level indicated that profit increases in fact were up 37.9 per cent, almost double the rate of increase in sales which was only 17.4 per cent, I ask the minister, is he fully satisfied that the very high prices paid by Canadian consumers in food stores are not in good measure due to the fact that companies are making more profits perhaps than they should be?

**Mr. Allmand:** Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence that the high profits are due to extraordinarily high prices. As a matter of fact, the AIB report referred to by the hon. member concluded that profit margins last year were quite in line with historical patterns and in some cases there were declines in the third quarter of the year.