

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Pearson: It is also possible for the minister's remarks to be misinterpreted, and they were—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**PROPOSED INCREASE IN PENALTIES FOR MARIJUANA USE**

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Justice whether in view of police statements made in the last couple of days regarding the explosive degree to which marijuana is being used in this country, consideration is being given by the government to bringing in legislation to increase the minimum penalty so there will be some deterrent to this very serious offence which is affecting the people of Canada in all the provinces.

Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Minister of Justice): No, Mr. Speaker, such consideration is not being given, but action is being taken now by the courts to increase the deterrent. Whereas previously the courts had very often taken the view that on the first offence possession would be met with a suspended sentence, now the inclination of the courts is to give a prison sentence and sometimes impose a very heavy fine in addition, precisely in order to increase that deterrent.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Was a suggestion made to the courts that the giving of suspended sentences was not in the interests of the administration of justice, and did that come from the Department of Justice?

Mr. Trudeau: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice has taken the position that if the courts requested a recommendation, the department would not ordinarily suggest a suspended sentence but would ask the courts to consider the position which was stated by the court of appeal in British Columbia, that is the position I have just stated, that a first offence would not automatically be met with a suspended sentence.

[Later:]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Justice whether it is the intention of his department to establish a study of the marijuana problem, in the light of changing social conditions and the harsh sentences that

[Mr. Speaker.]

have been imposed recently on high school and college students.

[Translation]

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I answered part of that question earlier, but I must say that the whole problem of drug addiction and of the rehabilitation of the offenders interests me greatly. I feel that quite often it would be more advisable to treat drug addicts than to send them to prison, but that matter is under consideration.

[English]

Mr. Diefenbaker: Treat them with what?

AGRICULTURE**EFFECT OF IMPORTS OF PROCESSED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent (Ont.)): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture. Can the minister inform the house whether the government has instigated any type of survey or any other action to ascertain to what degree increasing imports of processed fruits and vegetables will curtail Canadian farm contracts this year?

Hon. J. J. Greene (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, in answer to a question put to me by the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary with respect to the importation of Australian canned fruits, I indicated that this matter has been under study by an interdepartmental committee. A report has been received from that committee, which is presently under consideration. As any determination or resolution from the study of that report would involve government policy, any decision that is taken will be announced in the proper manner.

Mr. Danforth: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the minister whether this investigation is being expanded to cover imports from other countries such as canned or processed fruits which we get into this country from Australia.

Mr. Greene: So far as I know to date, the specific study to which I referred was limited to Australian canned peaches, as this was the complaint which was brought to our department by the peach growers and peach canners who have specifically complained about Australian imports.