

HEALTH

SUGGESTED WARNINGS ON ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE
CONTAINERS AND RESTRICTIONS ON ADVERTISING—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Does the minister intend warnings to be placed on alcoholic beverage containers similar to warnings placed on packages containing tobacco products, and does he plan to introduce more comprehensive regulations requiring more meaningful warnings to be put on these products and restricting advertising?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, last year I set up a departmental task force to consider alcoholism and techniques and methods which can be employed to reduce it. I expect a report in the next few weeks from the task force and will be able to advise the hon. member whether specific additional steps are planned.

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PETRO-CANADA

POSSIBLE ENTRY INTO REFINING AND MARKETING OF
PETROLEUM PRODUCTS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Considering the minister's expressed intention to direct the activities of the national petroleum company to the production, refining and marketing of petroleum products, and away from the less lucrative exploration for natural resources, can the minister inform this House, as he informed an audience in Pittsburgh recently, what form this new intrusion in the free market system will take? Does the government intend to provide Petro-Canada with further public funds in order to carry out that new activity?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I made it clear previously that the priorities of Petro-Canada are the exploration and development of Canada's far north resources.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a short supplementary question? The minister expressed his intention to expand activities. Does the government intend to buy an existing system or marketing company, instead of starting its own activity?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, Petro-Canada has already started its own activity, as the hon. member probably knows. The hon. member probably also knows that I stated on previous occasions, as did my predecessor, that at some point in time it may be of advantage to Petro-Canada to make an acquisition.

Oral Questions

● (1430)

HEALTH

REASON FOR RESIGNATION OF DR. WIGGINS FROM RESEARCH
BRANCH—REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE RESEARCH PROJECTS
CHOSEN ON BASIS OF MERIT

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Was the resignation of Dr. Wiggins from the research branch of his department at least in part related to political interference with the selection procedure for research projects under the department's research and development program?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, it was in no way connected, either directly or indirectly. Dr. Wiggins' resignation was a matter that had been discussed for quite a few months with the previous deputy minister as well as the present deputy minister. It was done purely at the administration level. It is the type of thing that one can expect in the public service once in a while.

Mr. Yewchuk: Since my information is at variance with what the minister has stated, can he assure the House that he has taken all steps necessary to ensure that research projects are chosen purely on the basis of merit and for no other reason?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has any information to the contrary, I challenge him to make a charge on that basis because I certainly would not tolerate political interference with research projects. I have never done so and I do not intend to do so in the future. If the hon. member has any facts, he should have the courage to stand up and make the charge.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister is a little sensitive over this. Because of that, he has failed to answer the question I asked him. Can the minister assure the House that all steps necessary have been taken to ensure that projects are chosen strictly on merit and for no other reason?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of sensitivity. The hon. member has made a serious allegation. He lacks the courage to stand up and be very precise.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: There was an allegation in the hon. member's question. Therefore, it was quite proper for me to raise this. I am glad to note the hon. member is backing off quite fast. As to the hon. member's question, there have been no steps taken for the good reason that there was no need to modify the previous practice which was clearly that research projects were decided on and carried out purely on the basis of merit.