

Order Paper Questions

to the issue of pension funds now being considered as income for unemployment insurance purposes. They call upon the House to encourage the Government to change this unfair and inequitable practice.

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[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: 523, 525 and 526.

[Text]

POST-HARVEST TREATMENT OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Question No. 523—**Mr. Caccia:**

1. Are fruits and vegetables, in Canada, subjected to post-harvest treatment whereby a waxy chemical coating is put on to preserve moisture and freshness and, if so, what are the names and chemical ingredients used?

2. Are the chemicals, licensed or otherwise regulated by the Government and, if so (a) which agencies regulate which chemicals and under what conditions (b) which chemicals are used but not regulated?

3. Are toxicity tests conducted on the chemicals in Canada or in the United States and, if so by (a) government (b) private laboratory?

4. Are the results of toxicity tests available to the public and, if so, how is the public informed of the contents and hazards of any of the chemicals used?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare):

1. Fruits and vegetables offered for sale in Canada may be subjected to post-harvest treatment with a "waxy" coating to prevent moisture loss and thus extend the keeping quality. In addition, the "waxy" coating protects against the invasion of spoilage micro-organisms. The chemical substances known to be used for this purpose are the following: mineral oil, petrolatum, paraffin, beeswax, carnauba wax, candelilla wax, shellac, sucrose fatty acid esters, oxidized polyethylene, carboxymethyl chitosan.

2. (a) and (b) All of these substances fall within the purview of the Canadian Food and Drugs Act and regulations administered by Health and Welfare Canada (HWC).

Mineral oil, petrolatum and paraffin are regulated as food additives under the Food and Drug Regulations. Although the remaining substances are not listed in the Food Additive Tables in the Regulations, they are subject to Section 4(a) of the Food and Drugs Act which states: "No person shall sell an article of food that has in or upon it any poisonous or harmful substance".

In this connection, the Health Protection Branch (HPB) of HWC has evaluated information pertaining to the safety of these chemicals and has determined that the use of these substances according to label directions would not pose a hazard to consumers and thus would not violate Section 4(a) of the Act.

3. (a) and (b) Various types of toxicological tests have been conducted on all the substances mentioned in (1) above. As a general rule, HPB does not undertake toxicity studies to support the use of chemicals in food but rather evaluates all available data which may have been produced by a variety of sources. In the case of these coatings, toxicity data are available from private laboratories, universities, et cetera in various countries including the United States, Canada and Europe.

4. Many of the toxicity studies available on these substances are published in the scientific literature and thus are available to the public. In addition, HPB is prepared to offer additional comments on the safety aspects of any of these chemicals. Substances considered to pose a hazard to consumers would not be permitted for use under existing regulatory authority.

EMPLOYMENT LEVELS IN COAL PRODUCING AREAS OF B.C.

Question No. 525—**Mr. Broadbent:**

1. (a) Did the Government make any studies on employment levels in the coal producing areas of southeast British Columbia and, if so, what were they (b) what action did the Government take to reduce the current levels of unemployment in the area?

2. What actions and/or representations did the Government initiate to encourage the Japanese Government to review coal purchasing policies by Japanese steel companies in British Columbia?

3. Did the Government make any formal representations to the Prime Minister of Japan when he visited Ottawa in January, 1986, to ensure that the coal mining communities of the Kootenays will not be made to suffer as a result of government-subsidized development of the northeast coal fields in British Columbia?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): I am informed by the Departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and Employment and Immigration as follows:

1. (a) Some analysis of employment levels in the coal producing areas of southeast B.C. was undertaken as part of the studies conducted by the Manpower and Human Resources subcommittee under terms of the 1977 Canada-British Columbia Subsidiary Agreement to evaluate northeast coal and related developments.

The following studies were published from work undertaken by this subcommittee: Coal Development in Northeastern British Columbia Construction Phase, Manpower Study, March, 1978. Day Care Services in the Proposed New Town, 1976, Development of Manpower Training Programs, 1978. Labour Turnover and Community Stability: Implications for Northeast Coal Development in British Columbia, February, 1978, Manpower Demand and Supply for the Northeast Coal Developments, 1981, Manpower Development and Promotion in the Coal Mining Industry, January, 1978, Migration, 1976, Northeast Coal Employment Survey, 1977 Report of the B.C. Manpower Subcommittee on Northeast Coal Development, November, 1976 Women in Mining - An Exploratory Study, October, 1976.

(b) Webstar Mining Ltd. responding significantly to reduced supply contracts (as much as 50 per cent) Westar was forced