

Oral Questions

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering whether the Minister of Labour is attempting to advise the House that the SIU is above the law in respect of infractions under the act under which it operates and which is within the jurisdiction of this particular legislative body, and that these should not be construed as infractions unless somebody complains?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Of course not, Mr. Speaker. All I am indicating—

Mr. Forrestall: That's what you said, John. Don't be so hyper.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): All I am indicating is that during the time the so-called "hiring hall" practice has been underway there have been no complaints in respect of it. I want to say as well that during negotiations on the Great Lakes this was not a principal issue of dispute between the employers and the employees. If the hon. member wishes to launch a complaint in respect of abuses of the so-called "hiring hall" system, there are mechanisms now in place to thoroughly investigate and come to a conclusion.

Mr. Forrestall: John, you are so sensitive about a completely straight-forward matter that you cannot see your nose.

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HEALTH

REASON FOR INCREASE IN PRICE OF INSULIN—INCREASE IN PRICE OF PANCREATIC GLANDS

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the price of insulin has increased by over 20 per cent in the last two months, and the fact that this price was held steady for years when Connaught Laboratories was under the aegis of the University of Toronto, can the Minister of National Health and Welfare explain why insulin production, which is essential for the survival of thousands of Canadians, was put on a profit making basis when Connaught Laboratories became part of the Canada Development Corporations?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That question has a very familiar ring to it. If I am not mistaken, another member of the hon. member's party put that question in exactly those words to the minister.

Mr. Brisco: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My question was prompted by a direct letter of inquiry from one of my constituents with information I was not aware had been presented before.

Mr. Speaker: I am not sure whether the minister answered the question at the time.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): No, I do not think it was. I wish to thank the hon. member for giving me notice of his intention to ask a question on this matter. I should like to draw his attention to the fact that animal pancreatic glands, from which insulin is made, have gone up in price very substantially

from approximately 35 cents a pound to 75 cents a pound. It is inevitable that some of this increase would show up in the price of insulin. I am just as concerned as the hon. member about the increase in the price. There has been a meeting between the interested parties concerned, the Connaught Laboratories, the Canadian Diabetic Association and several federal departments, at which the whole question of price and supply was discussed. Indeed, a close look is being taken at this situation. I might add that every indication is that the price of insulin has not gone up by as much as the price of the glands has gone up, and it is unlikely that it will do so.

Mr. Brisco: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact there has been such a pronounced increase in the price of the pancreatic glands which are used, as the minister has said, in the manufacture of insulin, and in view of the fact that this price is not reflected in current revenue, according to the cattle industry, what explanation does the minister have for the increase in the price of these particular organs?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I do not have a complete answer in respect of this particular situation, except that the price of animal products has gone up substantially over the last few years.

INSULIN—POSSIBLE HOARDING OF PANCREATIC GLANDS BY PRODUCERS TO DRIVE UP PRICE

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister whether he has carried out studies or investigations within his department to determine if producers are in fact withholding animal pancreas from the market in order to drive the price up? This is the evidence we have.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the evidence that my department has collected from the meetings and discussions that have taken place between the parties concerned, including the Canadian Diabetic Association and Connaught Laboratories, has not provided us with any indication at all of hoarding. There appears to be no foundation to this allegation. What has happened is that there has been a higher demand for glands, not only for insulin production but for other purposes. The packing industry has been made aware of the priority that should be given to providing glands for the production of insulin. The conclusion is that there is no reason to expect any particular shortage of insulin in the foreseeable future.

● (1510)

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief point of order for the sake of clarification. I do not want there to be any confusion in respect of *Hansard* tomorrow. The minister was referring to the Canada Labour Code in the course of an answer to me and I was referring to the Canada Shipping Act. I just want to have on the record that while he was speaking about complaints and so on pursuant to the Canada Labour Code I was referring to section 154 (1) of the Canada Shipping Act when I was asking the question.