

Oral Questions

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker, there is no formal investigation, although we are keeping a close watch on the investigation being carried out by the Ontario legislature. Let me say that the opinion of the director of investigations is that such rebates to a retailer would be legal as long as they were offered to all retailers who purchase in the same amounts. In other words, if they were not discriminatory they would be legal, but at this point it is difficult to say whether that is presently the case because all the evidence is not in.

Mr. Kempling: Mr. Speaker, would the minister indicate whether his director of combines investigations has indicated the impact these rebates may have in lowering farm profits and increasing prices to consumers, or does he believe that this is a normal cost recovery program, as large retailers have stated it is?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, the director and officials of our department are not yet ready to make a judgment on this and will not be ready until they have observed all the evidence. These possibilities must be examined, but we cannot make a report on the matter as yet.

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HEALTH AND WELFARE

INCREASED FUNDING FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Mr. S. Victor Railton (Welland): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In light of representations made to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs concerning the need for increased funding for the Medical Research Council, has the minister given further consideration to this matter in order that Canada's medical research capability can be properly sustained?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): *Oui, monsieur l'Orateur.* Yes, Mr. Speaker. If they did not understand "oui", I will put it in English. I would like to take this opportunity to confirm that the budget of the MRC, which had an increase of 5.8 per cent over last year's estimate, will now enjoy an increase of 11.8 per cent.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITMENT OF FUNDS TO MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister whether the 11.8 per cent increase of which she has spoken will be applied to the current year, or to next year; and could she also tell the House whether it represents any kind of long-term commitment to medical research?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, we have a long-term commitment to research, of course. If the hon. member is talking about the acute problem of arriving at some form of stability in respect of longer term funds, namely, over a period of three to five

[Mr. Kempling.]

years, Dr. René Simard, who started today as the new president of MRC, has already presented me with a first document, which I am studying at the time, which deals with this matter. As to the first question the hon. member raised, let me say that this increase will be in the current fiscal year.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

DEPLOYMENT OF NEUTRON BOMB

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of National Defence. It has to do with the neutron bomb and the fact that one of his chiefs of staff took the stand that without the neutron bomb, the overwhelming power of the U.S.S.R. would place the western world in a serious position in terms of defence.

One has only to go back to the debates of 1938-39, both in this parliament and in the parliament in Britain, to realize that the same discussions were taking place then in respect of up-to-the-minute technological developments.

In view of the fact that this senior officer has taken that position, and with the knowledge he has, which is not possessed by the rest of us, will he give consideration, before the summer adjournment takes place, to having a day set aside for discussion of defence in order that members generally, and the people as a whole, can come to their own conclusions in respect of this matter—a matter which is one of survival, if one accepts the defence point of view, or a situation that places us in an extremely vulnerable position if one adopts the disarmament view of others?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman raises a very interesting point. I would welcome the opportunity, if the opposition would choose one of its allotted days, to debate this subject.

As to the other points, I think the right hon. gentleman raises the point that the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Falls, gave a military appreciation, which is not uncommon, on the utility of the weapon. He did not question its battlefield utility. He was not making a recommendation with reference to maintaining a credible deterrence.

This government, through the Prime Minister, in the last few days has reaffirmed our commitment to the alliance as well as our continuing co-operation and co-ordination. Knowing full well the lessons of the past, one must be in a position to deter aggression. The best way, we all feel, including my colleagues, the defence ministers of NORAD, to do this would be to reduce the level of armament rather than to escalate it. In the meantime, we have confirmed and reconfirmed our position to increase our readiness so we can deal from a position of strength.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. The same arguments were made in 1938 and 1939 when so many countries in the western world failed to realize or to accept the