

Oral Questions

communicated with the Solicitor General. The conditions which were approved by cabinet were, as the Prime Minister said, that if it would enlarge our support we would go along with it. By Friday afternoon that was not so. It was indicated to the committee and we received some information to that effect. This was confirmed on Sunday, 48 hours later, by the Leader of the New Democratic Party. On Monday night the attorney general for Prince Edward Island was before the committee. On Monday afternoon the Premier of Prince Edward Island was objecting to it.

Mr. Clark: This was Friday.

Mr. Chrétien: As we were not, according to our directive, improving the consensus, we concluded that if we did not get unanimous support in the committee we would not go along with it. It was quite evident there was no unanimity. Therefore, on Monday we decided that, unfortunately the consensus was not developing. We could agree because we agreed in July—and I conceded to the provinces in the summer—that I would not impose this on them.

Mr. McGrath: Madam Speaker, my supplementary is to help the House try and get through that bafflegab. If he and the Prime Minister changed their minds because of opposition from the provinces—and he cited the attorney general of Prince Edward Island—can he tell us why the double standard? I recall the Premier of Saskatchewan coming before the committee and objecting in the strongest terms to the unilateral provisions of section 42, yet nothing has changed there. Why deny Canadians property rights while imposing upon them an amending formula which will deny their provincial rights in their legislatures?

● (1440)

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, the committee has yet to reach section 42. We will get to it soon if the opposition is prepared to get down to business and pass the amendments. The committee has now been sitting for four or five months and we are still on section 7. I think many sections have to be adopted between 7 and 42, and I have already indicated that we will be moving amendments to that section when we get to that stage of the resolution. We will settle that problem then. All I am saying, as I clearly explained in committee this morning, is that had the committee been unanimous—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. minister is now repeating what he said in committee this morning, and that is out of order because obviously we cannot entertain that question in both places. Therefore, I would urge the hon. minister to abide by the rules of the House.

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, I am quite prepared to abide by the rules, but I am answering the question put to me and if my reply is out of order, I suggest the question was out

of order as well and I am prepared to discuss it again at 3.30 this afternoon.

* * *

[English]

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**TESTING OF CHEMICAL SPRAYS—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION INTO POTENTIAL HEALTH HAZARDS**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: Changing the subject.

Mr. Dick: Here's the culprit.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Broadbent: I have a question for the Minister of National Defence.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Friesen: Self-defence.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are obviously upset because we managed to get a lot of amendments accepted by the government and they are losing out.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: My question to the Minister of National Defence concerns a very important health matter. American authorities have recognized the harmful effects of Agent Orange, contrary to what the minister of defence is implying. We have been misled in this House a number of times about the frequency of use of other chemicals of a military nature being tested in Canada. Finally, considering the erroneous information of different kinds related to the subject matter that has been presented to this House, will the minister now consider establishing an independent commission under the Inquiries Act which will have the full authority to investigate all the health implications of these tests, so that we can finally get to the bottom of this very serious health problem?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): I would first say, Madam Speaker, that I have never misled this House on the issue mentioned by the hon. member for Oshawa. I have always tried to state the truth regarding spraying, whatever kind it may be, certainly with regard to the two incidents since I have been minister. With regard to the one in Winnipeg, the truth came out in a report that was published. Everything was made clear and there was no question of a health hazard in connection with that spraying.

With regard to the second one in Oromocto or at the Gagetown base, this is another matter which the hon. member does not understand. The first was a harmless spraying over a portion of Winnipeg. The second was over a very small area of a large military base in places where there were no humans.