Canadians who want more research and development and some world mandates in this highly technical field, realize that putting these two groups together with government officials to try to reach an agreement, is surely better than the regime we have now.

PATENT LAW INQUIRY

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I certainly would not agree with the Minister on these points and I do not think the Consumers Association would either. His Department is largely responsible for research and development. Will he, or will he not, oppose any changes to patent laws that will substantially raise drug prices for Canadians?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, that is a hypothetical question. The Hon. Member is obviously of that school of thought that has dominated Canada so often, that it is cheaper to buy than to have research and development and a world mandate in Canada. Obviously the Government wants to have some research and development in Canada. The Government wants to ensure that we are a member of this high tech field, especially with regard to new drugs.

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[*Translation*]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

CONTRIBUTIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. For the second time in only a few months, a federal agency is submitting that it is unnecessary, for the time being, to raise contributions to the Canada Pension Plan. The advisory committee on the Canada Pension Plan and the Chief Actuary are suggesting a gradual increase in contributions to the Plan.

In fact, the Minister of Finance announced some time ago that he and his provincial colleagues were considering increasing contributions. I would therefore ask the Minister whether he has read the report and if so, whether he agrees with the report's recommendations concerning contributions.

[*English*]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct when he states that the Ministers of Finance, including the federal Minister, have met in regard to considering the possibility of maintaining the financing of the Canada Pension Plan. There are basically three recommendations in the report to which he refers, from the Canada Pension Plan Advisory Committee. I cannot get into the specifics during this short period of time, but if one looks at those recommendations he will see that in general terms they are similar to the task force report on pension reform that was brought forward in the last Parliament. The real question that we must examine with the provinces is how to maintain a funding level which not only keeps in mind the capacity to pay, for both employees and employers, but as well keeping the plan viable.

PROVINCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that the Canada Pension Plan is 20 years old this year. To keep the fund solvent and meet benefit requirements, we shall have to increase revenues. Will the Government bow to the wishes of the provinces and increase CPP contributions to the fund, or will the Government insist that the provinces start to repay over the years, on schedule as agreed, the $25 billion owing? Will it make that recommendation stick with the provinces?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Member raises a valid point in the sense that he recognizes that any changes to the Canada Pension Plan would have to be made jointly by the provinces and the federal Government. I will just remind the House that when the Canada Pension Plan was originally introduced it became a shared jurisdiction. It was for that reason that these arrangements were put forward as they were. The Government has said that it wants major pension plan reformation. There is not now a parallelism between the Quebec Pension Plan and the Canada Pension Plan. There are a number of issues that must be dealt with.

If there are any increases in the premiums, at whatever time or level they might come, I believe the Hon. Member would join with me and most Members of the House in saying that we would also like to see some changes in benefits as have been identified by my statements and other earlier statements.

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● (1450)

PETRO-CANADA

ATTEMPTS TO ACQUIRE CO-OP OUTLETS

Mr. Don Ravis (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources respecting letters I have received from the boards of directors of several Saskatchewan co-operatives protesting against attempts by Petro-Canada to acquire co-op bulk petroleum outlets.

Could the Minister advise the House why Petro-Canada is attempting to acquire the outlets of co-ops which represent a completely Canadian-owned segment of the petroleum industry? Furthermore, why has Petro-Canada not considered the impact of such take-overs on the planned co-op heavy oil refinery for Saskatchewan?