

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**Mr. McGrath:** On October 24, as recorded at page 693 of *Hansard*, when the minister covered himself with less than glory the last time there was contaminated meat sold on the market, he gave this undertaking:

—in any case where there is precise proof that meat unfit for human consumption has been sold, proceedings will be instituted under the regulations.

Some hon. Members: Order.

**Mr. McGrath:** He went on to say:

It will involve not only cases reported by my department's inspectors but also any one which might be spotted by any organization or any person.

Why did the minister not take action under the Food and Drugs Act immediately upon this matter being uncovered in the province of Quebec?

[Translation]

**Mr. Lalonde:** For an excellent reason, Mr. Speaker. It is quite simple, it is because the inquiry initiated by my officials did not provide enough information to enable them to take any legal action against anybody; there were only indications and it was at that time that we got in touch with police authorities to ask them to make a full investigation. When the inquiry now under way, since we are still at the inquiry stage, even though it is a commission of inquiry—when the inquiry is completed, if there is enough evidence to warrant legal action, my colleague, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Justice of the Province of Quebec will surely be advised of the facts and will take legal action as provided under the law.

[English]

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the minister is playing constitutional footsie with the government of Quebec.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

#### SUGGESTED INCREASE IN NUMBER OF MEAT INSPECTORS

**Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** In view of the widespread use of this practice of selling contaminated and diseased meat to the public, what is the minister doing now, in accordance with his authority under the statute, to increase the inspection capability under the Food and Drugs Act and to lay charges immediately?

● (1420)

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** As I indicated last fall, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the number of inspections under the Food and Drugs Act. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), has over 1,200 officials throughout Canada who inspect meat, and the provincial authorities have also several hundreds of inspectors. As to the proceedings to be instituted, as I indicated yesterday, may I refer my hon. colleague to *Hansard* which he should at least make a point to read. An investigation is under way, and we have decided to postpone legal action so as not to cause preju-

#### Oral Questions

dice to the current investigation. We shall try to get all the facts and, as soon as they are known, the necessary action will be taken.

[English]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very important matter—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.

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#### ENERGY

OIL—POSSIBILITY OF CONCURRENCE IN PRICE INCREASE SUGGESTED BY ALBERTA—DATE OF ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW PRICE

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources concerns the announcement by provincial energy minister Donald Getty that the Alberta government has set the price for oil at \$9 to \$10 per barrel subject to negotiations regarding the time period during which this will be implemented. Can the minister tell the House if this is a unilateral decision by the government of Alberta or whether the federal government has concurred and the target price is to be \$9 to \$10 per barrel subject to negotiation regarding the time frame during which such a price will be put into effect?

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I can say there has been no agreement on a specific price with the government of Alberta either for this year or a specific target price in the future. I think it is fair to say there is common ground between the two governments as to moving to a further level of price for oil and natural gas over a period of time by a series of steps, but there has been no agreement either on a price to which we are to move or the level and the steps by which to move there.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** A supplementary question. In view of the fact that the present voluntary agreement of \$6.50 per barrel for oil expires at the end of June, and in view of the fact that a great many business concerns and farmers will be interested in knowing what the price is going to be, is the minister now in a position to tell us what the price will be commencing July 1 and what price the government proposes to set? If he cannot tell us today how soon will he be able to announce the price following expiry of the present agreement?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Mr. Speaker, I have been guided by statements Premier Lougheed has made that he would see no necessity—I hope I quote him correctly—for a price increase on July 1 so long as there were significant discussions taking place on this particular question. I cannot confirm either that there will be an increase on