

Starred Questions

CONSUMER PRICES ON DAIRY PRODUCTS

Question No. 60—Mr. McIlraith:

What was the average price to the Canadian consumer (basis Montreal market) for each of the following commodities, during period January 1, 1958 to March 12, 1959: (i) cheese; (ii) skim milk powder; (a) spray process; (b) roller process; (iii) egg powder; (iv) egg melange; (v) shell eggs?

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Minister of Agriculture): This question apparently is asking for the average retail prices in Montreal for a variety of agricultural products. This is a statistic which we do not have in the department. It would involve, of course, taking the daily prices in all the stores in Montreal in order to secure it, and I think it is apparent that this is the kind of thing we cannot produce. I think the hon. member could get this information for himself fairly well by looking over the pages of the Montreal newspapers, and looking at the advertising of the grocerias there, which would give the prices of those commodities from day to day. He could get the information perhaps better in that way than in any other way.

There is one thing I would point out, Mr. Speaker, namely that as far as egg melange is concerned, it is not sold to the retail trade; it is sold to bakeries.

R.C.M.P. REINFORCEMENTS, N.F.L.D.—PROTESTS TO MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

Question No. 61—Mr. Pickersgill:

1. Has the Minister without Portfolio from Newfoundland received any communications protesting against the failure of the government to send Royal Canadian Mounted Police reinforcements to Newfoundland? If so, how many?

2. What is the nature of reply, if any, made by the minister to such communications?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members will note that this question asks the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Browne) whether he has received communications protesting against the failure of the government to send Royal Canadian Mounted Police reinforcements to Newfoundland and, if so, how many. The second part of the question reads:

What is the nature of reply, if any, made by the minister to such communications?

Although the Minister without Portfolio might wish to reply, this question seems to me to be outside our practice and I would not like to have it put and create a precedent. I wish to give the house my views on the question by referring them to paragraph 1 of standing order 39, which provides that:

Questions may be placed on the order paper seeking information from ministers of the crown relating to public affairs; and from other members, relating to any bill, motion, or other public matter connected with the business of the house, in which such members may be concerned.

[Mr. Monteith.]

In citation 178, in his fourth edition, Beauchesne comments on this rule as follows:

Questions addressed to ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in parliament, or to any matter of administration for which the minister is responsible.

In citation 171, paragraph (x), the same author states:

A question oral or written must not deal with an action of a minister for which he is not responsible to parliament.

Then turning to May 16th edition, this is said at page 356 under "Questions to Ministers":

Questions addressed to ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in parliament, or to matters of administration for which they are responsible. Within these limits an explanation can be sought regarding the intentions of the government, but not an expression of their opinion upon matters of policy. A question should be addressed to the minister who is primarily responsible, and misdirected questions are transferred by the clerks at the table on the notification of the departments concerned.

Then Campion at page 151, under the heading "Responsibility of Minister", observes as follows:

A question should be directed to a minister officially responsible for the subject matter with which it deals.

A little later on he says that one type of prohibited question is:

Putting to a minister a question for which another minister is more directly responsible or asking one minister to influence the action of another.

Finally Redlich, who is a very authoritative commentator, says in *The Procedure of the House of Commons*, volume 2, page 243:

A question must be precisely formulated and must be addressed to the minister who is officially connected with the matters to which it relates.

While this is perhaps not a serious matter, I feel we should keep our practice within the established limits rather than going beyond them, and it is therefore my view that a question relating to this subject matter of the R.C.M.P. ought to be addressed to the Minister of Justice. The question in this form does not appear to me to be appropriate.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Would Your Honour allow me to make one observation? I would not, of course, want to challenge the decision or interpretation of the rule which Your Honour has given but, if I may, I should like to draw Your Honour's attention to citation 178 in Beauchesne, fourth edition, which I think can perhaps be interpreted in more than one way. It reads as follows:

Questions addressed to ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in parliament—