

Oral Questions

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, there will have to be further action taken with respect to the establishment of the accuracy of the figures. I fully agree with the comments of the hon. member as far as they go. We are conscious of this situation. The diagnostic approach to that particular occupational group was the subject of a separate study. The overclassification is approximately as the hon. member has indicated. We want to do what we call a desk audit, which includes interviewing the people concerned, before we take final action in correcting the overclassification.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the only figure the minister questioned is the 19.3 per cent. Is it the intention of the minister to rewrite the standards to make all those who were wrongly classified appear correctly classified? I ask this question because this, as well, is a procedure which is spelled out in the memo, which states:

Phase VI, Implementation of change—amendment of manual as required.

This is supposed to be in effect from May 15 until October 1. Is the minister contemplating rewriting the standards so that what looked bad at one time will now appear to look good? Is this where we are heading?

Mr. Andras: No, Mr. Speaker.

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AIR TRANSPORT**INSURANCE FOR PASSENGERS OF COMMERCIAL CARRIERS**

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport: it relates to the tragic air crash at Cranbrook, British Columbia, which we were discussing in the House last week.

The Ministry of Transport has regulations in effect which make every commercial air carrier carry insurance on the lives of all passengers. Now that the Cranbrook air crash hearings are over and it is very clear that no passenger was to blame, would the minister follow up the regulations of his department and direct the insurance companies, which have been paid for this insurance, to make payments to all passengers so as to honour their contracts which the passengers paid for when buying their tickets?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would require a legal opinion as to whether the regulations and my powers go as far as the hon. member seems to indicate. I know that the matter is under very serious discussion at the moment among the various parties involved, and I am not at all sure that I have a right to interfere with those discussions at this point in time.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's statement of government policy that the government has no responsibility to see that its regulations are carried out, I would like to ask a supplementary question. In view of the fact that the lawyers in this case are advocating that the passengers be paid, in order to take the

responsibility from the insurance companies, would the minister now reconsider the policy of the government and go back to the original purpose of the policy, which was that the insurance companies should meet their contractual obligations and pay the passengers when death, not negligence, is proved?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I did not say that we had no responsibility with regard to our regulations. There can be no doubt about that. But the question is what those regulations require. That may well raise certain legal questions as to responsibility which are not answered by the existence of the regulations. I must have that legal opinion before I can take any further position.

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HEALTH AND WELFARE**PRESENCE OF SODIUM NITRITE IN BACON—CONNECTION WITH CANCER**

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It concerns the recent announcement in the United States that the government there is going to move to lower the amount of sodium nitrite in bacon because of the possible connection of nitrites with cancer in laboratory testing.

I would like to ask the minister whether she is aware of the move in the United States and, if she is, why is the Canadian government not following suit by putting restrictions on the amount of sodium nitrite in bacon in this country?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear of any recent development in the United States on that question. The Americans do have a different approach from ours, and if the hon. member would permit, I would like to inquire and give a full answer in the coming days.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, the United States will be moving to reduce the amount of sodium nitrite to 120 parts per million by June 15, and to 40 parts per million by next year. Meanwhile, in Canada the legislation allows 150 parts per million. I would like to know whether the minister will undertake to check with her officials to see whether Canadian officials can look into the issue in this country with a view to making the same move the Americans have already made, which is very important.

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, we do not develop Canadian policy simply by copying the moves made by the United States. I would like to stress that, and also to speak of the particularly good work done by the health protection branch of my department. As I said in my first answer, I would want to look at the recent developments in the United States and to see if there is any need for change in Canada.