

Inquiries of the Ministry

insurance, he obtained clearance from the Minister of Finance with regard to going beyond a 6 per cent increase?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, before I announced the white paper I obtained clearance from the members of the cabinet. It is a good document and they endorsed it entirely.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Labour if a 32 per cent increase is not a violation of the announced policy of the Minister of Finance who a moment ago said the government did agree to the 6 per cent increase. Will the minister, on behalf of organized labour, ask his colleagues to refrain from blaming labour for any violation of the 6 per cent guideline when his own department is doing likewise.

HEALTH AND WELFARE**INCLUSION OF OPTOMETRIC SERVICES UNDER MEDICARE**

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the hardship imposed on Canadians living outside the larger urban centres by the shortage of ophthalmological services, and in light of the consensus on the matter achieved by the provinces participating in medicare, would the minister now assure the House that equal access to eye infraction care will be made available to all Canadians through optometric services being covered by the medicare program?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member did refer to what we require in terms of a consensus from the provinces. We will be having a meeting shortly, within the next couple of months, with the provincial health ministers at which we will again canvass for a consensus. As the hon. member knows, there have been changes of government in at least two of the provinces fairly recently and if a widespread consensus does occur the government will have to consider extended coverage under medicare.

Mr. Dinsdale: Mr. Speaker, do I take from the minister's remarks that optometric services would be considered provided all provinces participating in medicare achieve a consensus on this point?

Mr. Munro: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is very largely true; but as the hon. member knows

[Mr. MacInnis.]

we have not been really prepared to discuss extended coverage under medicare until all provinces are, in fact, in medicare under its present terms and conditions. That is not the case as of yet.

Mr. Dinsdale: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wish to bring to the attention of hon. members that we will shortly run out of time, and perhaps at this point we should limit the supplementaries.

POLLUTION**WINNIPEG RIVER—SOURCE OF MERCURY CONTAMINATION**

Mr. E. B. Osler (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries. In view of the reported discovery of serious mercury pollution and death of fish in the Winnipeg River immediately below Kenora, Ontario, what steps have been taken to pinpoint the source of the pollution and to stop it? I see that the minister has left.

SHIPPING**REPLACEMENT FOR MV "PATRICK MORRIS"**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Transport if he is in a position to report what tangible result his efforts to date have had in alleviating the acute shortage of transportation on the Gulf of St. Lawrence between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I can report on the next phase of the negotiations. Last week I indicated that we were dealing with a firm in Norway. Representatives of that company have now come to Canada. We have indicated we are prepared to enter into what is known as a bare-boat charter with them but it does involve these technical changes to which I referred. These are being discussed with officials of the department. I hope that an agreement will be reached within the next 24 hours.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, does the minister propose to proceed with the interim plan to use barges on the Cabot Strait?

Mr. Jamieson: If necessary we will. We have located a couple in New York which we think will be suitable. The problem is obtaining a type of barge which will fit the facility at the end of the strait. I hope with the