

there is a potential disaster like the one with which we are now faced.

We know that there is technology available for the destruction of these dangerous substances. Since the present law brought in this year is inadequate, will the Government recognize the seriousness of the situation and bring in a new measure that will make it compulsory to destroy these substances? That is the issue.

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as we indicated on Friday, there is a new technology that has been developed by the NRC which apparently is revolutionary in dealing with PCBs, and I am sure that this Government will do whatever is necessary in order that PCBs, when stored, are stored safely, and hopefully destroyed without any danger to the health and security of all Canadians.

STORAGE OF PCBs

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, on May 31, 1985, three years and three months ago, the federal Government agreed to "a national system of destruction facilities for PCBs involving a mix of fixed and mobile facilities," and the proposed facility in Québec would "treat high-level PCBs and other chlorinated organic waste from the rest of eastern Canada and the Atlantic provinces".

Since the technology to destroy PCBs has been available for years, what has happened since the announcement three years ago and since the borders of Alberta and the United States were closed to the transportation of PCBs? Why is there such a location in Saint-Basile-le-Grand? Why are there 71 locations in Nova Scotia, 41 locations in New Brunswick, 14 locations in Prince Edward Island, and dozens of locations in Newfoundland? A potential Saint-Basile exists in every province in Atlantic Canada.

● (1440)

Why has the Government failed in its promise of leadership three years ago to rid this country of this deadly chemical?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as was indicated previously in this House, particularly on Friday, the prime responsibility for storage and maintenance of PCBs is a provincial one. The Province of Quebec did proceed and is proceeding with respect to dealing with the substance known as PCBs.

It is obvious that all Governments are concerned about what happened in Saint-Basile-le-Grand. This Government in particular, with the co-operation of all Governments in Canada, will make sure that such instances do not occur again, and deal with the maintenance and destruction of PCBs in a safe way in order that they do not damage or endanger Canadians' health and security.

Oral Questions

NEWFOUNDLAND RAILWAY—TRANSPORTATION OF PCBs

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the only way PCBs are transported in Canada today is by rail from each province to the port of Montreal where they are containerized and then sent across the ocean to Pontypool, Wales, in the United Kingdom, for destruction.

It is outrageous enough that we would be shipping our filth to another country and risking the ocean environment while we are doing it, but does the Government not realize that by discontinuing the Newfoundland Railway next month it will be unable to carry PCBs by rail? Is the Government suggesting they be carried by our one and only road across the province? Does the Government not realize that every province in Canada has alternate road routes and a railway on which to carry dangerous chemicals? Newfoundland has neither.

Will the Government of Canada now keep the railway open for the transportation of dangerous goods, or does it care about the health and safety of Newfoundlanders?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I am tempted of course to try to be as amusing as the Hon. Member but I think this issue is serious enough that we should perhaps not try to divert attention from this important subject.

I understand that some provinces were very concerned with dealing with PCBs, Québec in particular, which was working and is still working on a project with respect to the destruction of PCBs. Obviously the population is involved and there is intense consultation that is going on, but I can assure all Hon. Members of this House, and Canadians in general, that the federal Government will continue to co-operate with the provinces in order to come up with a valid solution to this problem with safety for all Canadians.

WINNIPEG—STORAGE OF PCBs IN RAILWAY BOXCAR

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I think we have had a good example here this afternoon of what is wrong with environmental law. The Minister of the Environment in Manitoba maintained for two days that it was a federal matter, and the Minister here, when he is backed into a corner, says it is a provincial matter. The fact is there is a need for co-ordination at both levels to deal with the problem. It has not been dealt with properly by any level of government.

The Minister has said we ought to pay attention to the facts. I ask him how he has the nerve to get up and say on behalf of the Minister of the Environment that the boxcar, which incidentally is in my riding, has a fence around it? I was there Thursday afternoon. I walked in from Springfield Road. There is no fence. You just walk in, and walk down the track.

I was there for half an hour and I never even bumped into anybody. I went back later under CP Rail supervision to have a look at the car. There was no seal on it but there is now; no lock, only a bolt.