

Transport on a related matter, the transportation of dangerous substances. I apologize for having been unable to give him notice. Has the minister received a request from Canadian National Railways or CP Rail seeking legislation to limit the liability of these multimillion dollar corporations for any damage suffered by Canadians as third parties resulting from the transportation of dangerous goods? What is the limit being sought, and what is the minister's response to this inquiry?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am not aware of any formal request to that effect. I remember speaking with the president of CN about the fact that they now carry a very high level of insurance for material such as the hon. member has in mind. The railways are insured. As to whether they have asked for a limitation of liability, I will look into that and give the hon. member an answer at the earliest opportunity.

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CANADA LABOUR CODE

PROTECTION OF URANIUM MINERS

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour.

Early last week three of my NDP colleagues and myself met with officials of the United Steelworkers and some 50 uranium miners at Elliot Lake, Ontario. These workers are angry. They told us, and we agree, that the government's referencing last May of Ontario bill 70 into part IV of the Canada Labour Code has been a total bungle, a botch-up. Uranium miners in Elliot Lake and throughout Canada are now left surrounded and jeopardized by a jurisdictional no man's land which leaves them entirely without protection from the very real and hazardous dangers of that industry.

What action is now being taken to protect the safety and health of these miners, as promised by the Minister of Justice in reply to the hon. member for Brant on December 16 of last year?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I assure him that the reports he has received are not accurate. The uranium mines are well protected by the regulations and the incorporation through reference of the Ontario regulations. I want to say to the hon. member that the jurisdictional question is one that would be more appropriately directed to the Minister of Justice, but it is my information that the process that has been undertaken is legal and the miners are as well protected by the regulations as they would be if they were under provincial regulations.

I might say that submissions were made by the steelworkers requesting that joint safety and health committees be established at the two largest uranium mines, Denison and Rio Algom at Elliot Lake. They were accordingly ordered to be established at these two locations in an order dated April 14. As of this date they are not yet in operation, due to the refusal

of the steelworkers to nominate labour members to these committees.

Mr. Kristiansen: Madam Speaker, the minister and his government with their majority may be protected, but the people on the ground floor of the industry in Elliot Lake do not think that they are, and they are the ones who ought to know. Because of what these workers see as the government's bungling and their consequent lack of protection, I want to ask the minister this question, which does not have anything to do with jurisdiction.

Will the minister, along with the rest of the government's Punch and Judy show—the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who have the punch, along with the member for Nickel Belt who apparently does not have any—go to Elliot Lake and meet with the miners there, as the miners demanded? They asked us last week to forward that request to the government. Will they go there soon to learn from these people, whose health and lives are at stake, what they think are the realities in that industry?

Mr. Regan: I thank the hon. member for his supplementary. I appreciate his concern, but I feel sorry about his lack of accurate knowledge on the subject. I want to assure him that the minister of mines has been there on a regular basis and has had a number of meetings. I want to further assure the hon. member that I met with the officials of the union here in Ottawa on the subject. We had a thorough discussion of the matter. We explained in great detail the legalities of the situation. I want to say to the hon. member that he would do a great service if he would pass back to any friends he has the fact that these miners are as well protected by safety regulations as those in any mine in Canada.

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● (1440)

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

INQUIRY WHETHER POTATO GROWERS BENEFIT FROM STABILIZATION INSURANCE

Mr. Marcel Dionne (Chicoutimi): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture I will direct my question to his parliamentary secretary. Potato growers in every province of Canada have qualified 1980 as a disastrous year because their income from sales was much lower than production costs. I would like to know whether the government will support them through agricultural stabilization as it did in recent years and, if so, when and how much assistance can Canadian growers expect to receive, since they are eagerly waiting for that answer to plan their seeding operations for 1981.