

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, if I might reword my question, is the minister considering reorganizing the grant and loans structure for university students?

Mr. MacEachen: Not directly, Mr. Speaker. It is a matter under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Finance.

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

SUGGESTED CONGRATULATIONS ON ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): May I direct a question to the Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister, in his capacity as keeper of the Canadian Bill of Rights, express on behalf of the House of Commons our congratulations to the National Press Club for having decided to recognize women?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is making a suggestion rather than asking a question.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

SAFETY OF WATER FROM CONTAMINATED LAKES AND RIVERS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare and has to do with a concern being engendered in all parts of Canada by persons who use the waters of lakes or rivers which have been placed out of bounds for fishing because of mercury poisoning and the like. Is there any danger whatever to the individual in consuming that water for drinking purposes and general domestic use? I think his assurance on this score would go a long way to remove the fears.

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I must say that at many levels of government and amongst the people generally it is agreed that many of the waters of this country are polluted and are not safe for drinking purposes. I do not think that the Departments of Health, federally or provincially, would be prepared to give any undertaking that these waters could be consumed safely.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I would then confine my question to two particular rivers.

[Mr. Speaker.]

What about the use of water from the Ottawa or Saskatchewan Rivers? Has any examination been made?

Mr. Munro: Mr. Speaker, without checking into the matter further, at the moment I would not be prepared to give any undertaking with respect to either of these rivers.

[Later:]

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare if he can assure the Canadian people that waters contaminated by mercury, if processed by the filtering plants normally utilized by cities, are thus guaranteed fit for human consumption?

Mr. Munro: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

YELLOWKNIFE—INDIAN DEATHS ALLEGEDLY CAUSED BY SEWAGE PLANT WATER

Mr. R. R. Southam (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, this is a supplementary and related question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare which no doubt will be of interest to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Has the minister received a written statement from Mr. Roy Daniels, President of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, alleging that polluted water coming from the sewage plant at Yellowknife was the cause of a number of deaths among both Indian adults and children during the past winter? If so, what action is the government taking to investigate and rectify this serious situation?

An hon. Member: Nobody knows.

[Later:]

Mr. Southam: Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, I had a legitimate supplementary question.

Mr. Munro: I am sorry. I missed the hon. member's question.

Mr. Southam: The question is related to the one put by the right hon. member for Prince Albert. Has the minister received a written statement from Mr. Roy Daniels, President of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, alleging that polluted water coming from the sewage plant at Yellowknife was the cause of a number of deaths among both Indian adults and children during the past winter? If so, what action is the government taking to investigate and rectify this serious situation?