

Inquiries of the Ministry

tion in the water, may I ask whether the hon. gentleman intends to help the fishermen financially so as to compensate them for the damage sustained?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): I have been in touch with the two ministers from the province of Quebec who are concerned with this problem. I might say there appears to be no difficulty whatever in the salt water areas off Quebec.

LENGTH OF TIME REQUIRED TO CLEAN UP
MERCURY CONTAMINATED WATERS

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Since experts from Canada and Sweden differ as to the length of time mercury lasts in fish—estimates vary between 26 weeks and a century—and the effects on the resource as a whole, can the minister forecast with certainty how long it will take to complete clean-up operations in bodies of water which have been contaminated by mercury? Can he also tell us whether his department is insisting that all new plants provide assurances that their aqueous wastes will not contain mercury?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): There is really no conflict of opinion between the experts in Canada and Sweden on this question. Mercury has a half-life in fish of between two months and three months. In other words, the mercury content will be reduced by half in roughly 70 days. As to the second part of the question, we are pursuing with the provinces concerned the clean-up procedures necessary to remove the harmful sediments at the bottom of the rivers which have been affected.

Mr. Crouse: A supplementary question. The last part of my question was whether the minister is insisting that new plants provide assurances that their aqueous wastes will not contain mercury.

Mr. Davis: Mr. Speaker, we have had several meetings here in Ottawa with representatives of all the companies concerned who have assured us that they are doing their utmost to clean up as quickly as possible.

HOUSING

MEASURES TO STIMULATE CONSTRUCTION—
TARGET FOR 1970

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to [Mr. Yanakis.]

welcome back to the House the Minister without Portfolio in charge of housing. I thought he had fled the country permanently after having seen the figures for housing starts for the first four months of this year. May I ask the minister whether, in view of these figures, he can indicate very briefly and in general terms what measures he proposes to take to stimulate the construction of housing during the balance of the year, and what target he expects to achieve during the year?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition has been asked on previous occasions and I have taken the liberty before of suggesting that this question should be answered by way of a statement on motions. I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition would like to amend the question along these lines?

Mr. Stanfield: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister be prepared to make a statement to the House indicating what measures he proposes to take to stimulate the construction of housing to an appropriate level? In the course of that statement will he also indicate what he considers to be an appropriate level of construction during the course of the year?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, there will be an opportunity to discuss this matter in detail when I appear before the committee with my estimates, I believe early next week. In the meantime, may I say that one result of my trip has been that I am impressed by the better housing standards and the better quantitative performance of housing starts in this country vis-à-vis almost every country I visited whose officials I talked to.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

LABOUR RELATIONS

WEST COAST TOWBOAT STRIKE—MANNING
AND SAFETY REGULATIONS—GOVERNMENT
ACTION TO RESOLVE DISPUTE

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister in regard to the towboat strike in British Columbia which is causing very regrettable economic dislocation. This strike involves the questions of manning and safety. May I ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the government is taking any action in this matter to bring the parties together? Particularly in view of the fact that the Minister of Labour is ill, is any minister