

Hon. Judd Buchanan (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the policy still remains as stated by the hon. member, and each individual case is reviewed by the full Treasury Board before a decision is taken.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer. Perhaps he would look into two other incidents at his convenience. One is the payment of \$87,000 to Olympia and York Developments for guard services at a building here in Ottawa, and the other is the payment of \$500,000 to Ste. Marie Air Services for alleged loss of earnings resulting from the opening of Mirabel airport.

It seems to me that the minister should be interested in checking into these matters which contrast strangely with the definition of *ex gratia* payments and the usual amounts paid under the circumstances.

Mr. Buchanan: Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to consider the representations of the hon. member and look into these two particular cases.

* * *

HEALTH AND WELFARE

MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MARITIME INDIAN CHIEFS

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The minister has reneged on her promise to meet with the maritime chiefs and has decided to meet with the National Indian Brotherhood and one representative from each province. The fact remains that the very particular problems which the maritimes have still remain unresolved.

Can the minister tell the House if she will meet with the maritime chiefs, who have come to Ottawa again, in the hope that she will not insult them again and that this time she will sit down with them—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yewchuk: —to discuss the very serious concerns they have with regard to health care for their people in the maritime provinces?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the quality of assistance given to Indians in our country, as I am sure all members are.

I do not think that I have ever insulted the maritime chiefs. I told them at the end of the parliamentary meeting before Christmas here in Ottawa that the next time I had occasion to go to the maritimes I would meet with them. I made this suggestion in order to save them the cost of transportation. I will be holding conferences in Moncton, Sydney and Charlottetown only on February 8 and 9.

Oral Questions

I was very concerned when I heard the report by the CBC and also the questions by the hon. gentleman to the effect that there were deaths caused by the policy of my department. I immediately sent a telex inviting the people concerned from across the country, because it is a problem throughout Canada and not just in the maritimes. The meeting will be tomorrow afternoon. I think it is more important to have this meeting and avert any misunderstanding now, rather than waiting two more weeks when I will be visiting the maritimes. I am sure the hon. member will understand this.

Of course the maritime chiefs will be invited. The National Indian Brotherhood is the body which is organizing the meeting. I do not know exactly who will be present, but the door is open.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, in view of the widespread opposition to the minister's new policy of cutbacks in Indian health services which was imposed without prior consultation with the people involved, would the minister agree to postpone this policy for six months in order that she may consult with the Indian people fully before she makes a final decision on the implementation of this inhuman policy?

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member should swallow the words "inhuman policy", because as far as I am concerned he is in the potatoes.

We are talking about guidelines, which means the rules of the game, to determine what can be spent, for what reason, and for whom. We will be using public funds and we would like the money from these expenditures to go to Indians who need it. The hon. member should know very well what we are talking about.

Further to my telex, no cases of abuse have been reported to me. At the meeting tomorrow I will ask the various leaders if they know of any cases of abuse, because I would like to look into each matter personally.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL REVENUE

MINISTER'S REMARKS ON CANADIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. In view of the importance of the textile industry for all of Canada and specifically for the province of Quebec, I would like to know why he stated, while he was abroad, that all textile plants here in Canada should be closed and the production of textiles left to countries where labour is cheaper?