

Oral Questions

HEALTH

LEAD CONTENT OF GASOLINE

West? He calls his corporate friends to get the total landings, but he does not bother to inform the House that the price of fish is half what it was last year and fishermen's incomes are halved. Many fishermen have had no landings whatsoever in significant areas of the province. I am not interested in the statistics—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tobin:—I am interested in people, fishermen and their families.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member can complete his question.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, my question is a straightforward one, a very straightforward one. Given that fishermen are primary producers, just as farmers are primary producers, and given that the price of fish is half what it was last year, and in some areas there have been no landings whatsoever, will the fishermen of Atlantic Canada, and in particular those in Newfoundland and Labrador most severely affected, be treated exactly the same as the farmers of the country and be offered financial compensation? It was right and proper in the case of farmers. We saluted it. It is right and proper in the case of fishermen. Why will you not announce it?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I just gave the figures to show the increase in landed value of the fish caught this year. In cod it is up from \$28 million, compared to the first six months of last year, to \$40 million this year. The fishermen are getting \$40 million so far this year rather than \$28 million—

Mr. Tobin: The fishermen are not. They are getting half the price. You are lying to the House.

Mr. Crosbie:—for the landed value of cod. In capelin it is up from \$7 million to \$28 million. In crab it has gone from \$8 million to \$10 million. We have a program, a Newfoundland inshore fisheries agreement, infusing \$60 million into the fishery over the next five years. We are spending \$10.7 million this year in capital projects in harbours, and infrastructures.

● (1450)

In any particular area where there is a disastrous inshore fishery we will continue to assist as we have done in past years. The over-all inshore fishery in Newfoundland this year is better than last year. The hon. gentleman is totally and maliciously wrong in what he says.

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Health who will know that evidence is mounting and is coming from a variety of sources that lead in quantities smaller than heretofore thought is harmful to human health, and particularly to the development of children.

Will the Minister admit that the Government's plans to reduce the lead in gasoline are too little and too slow? Will he announce that the Government will speed up the removal of lead from gasoline to improve the health of Canadians, especially children?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member has indicated, the Government of Canada has put forward a program to remove lead from gasoline by 1992, and the responsibility falls particularly within the Ministry of the Environment, but not exclusively.

Recently a study was presented to the Minister of the Environment and myself respecting the program for lead removal by 1992, as well as the effect of lead on the development of children, especially infants. The Department is examining that information, and I have asked for recommendations relative to that report.

CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO LEAD

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. The latest estimates are that half a million Canadian children are at risk from present levels, and indeed these may be low estimates given the harm that lead does to the development of children.

Will the Minister confirm the figure that half a million children are over-exposed to lead and that their development might be harmed, or does the Minister have another figure that he could give us as to exactly how many children are being harmed by exposure to lead today?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I cannot dispute that figure or confirm it. It was in a report that was given to two Departments and, as I already mentioned, to two Ministers.

I wish to tell the Hon. Member with respect to lead removal, and I am not putting forward that other action might not be considered with regard to gasoline, that also lead soldering in containers, especially containers for baby food and infant formulas, is being examined.

I have asked my Department for further recommendations following not only that report but other work that has been done in the Government respecting lead poisoning.