

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 3, 1971

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

MISCELLANEOUS PRIVATE BILLS AND STANDING ORDERS

Second and third reports of Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Private Bills and Standing Orders—Mr. Forget.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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[English]

HEALTH

STATEMENT ON PRESENCE OF TYPHOID ON LIBERIAN FREIGHTER "BIRTIE MICHAELS"

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a brief statement to the House concerning a confirmed case of typhoid aboard the Liberian freighter *Birtie Michaels* which is presently berthed in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

The United States Public Health Service authorities have informed my officials that a suspected case of typhoid contracted by the wife of a crew member has been confirmed. This occurred at Chicago, Illinois, and following a full health inspection the vessel was cleared for passage to Thunder Bay. On arrival at Thunder Bay on the night of June 1, the *Birtie Michaels* was held at anchor pending a full investigation by federal, municipal and provincial health authorities.

On the morning of June 2 the ship was boarded by federal and municipal health officials, the crew medically examined, and the food, water, eating and sanitation facilities thoroughly checked. None of the crew were found to have symptoms or signs suggestive of typhoid. However, two crew members with minor symptoms not specific to typhoid have been removed to the Port Arthur General Hospital for observation.

Following the examination the ship was allowed to proceed under strict surveillance to its berth to load its cargo. The crew are confined to the ship and are being medically examined daily, and will not be allowed ashore until released by federal and municipal health authorities.

I wish to assure the House, the people of Thunder Bay, and indeed all Canadians that every necessary measure is being taken to ensure the safety and health of the crew of the *Birtie Michaels* and of all Canadians. At the same time I would like to acknowledge the assistance and co-operation of the U.S. Public Health Service, the

Ontario Department of Health, and the local hospital, medical and harbour authorities in Thunder Bay.

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the brief statement by the Minister of National Health and Welfare concerning the confirmed case of typhoid aboard the Liberian freighter *Birtie Michaels* which is presently berthed at Thunder Bay, Ontario. According to the statement, it was reported by the U.S. Public Health Service that they had discovered a case of typhoid in the wife of a crew member. This occurred at Chicago, Illinois, and after a thorough investigation the vessel was cleared for passage to Thunder Bay.

My understanding is that this boat came from Spain, having sailed on May 7, 1971, with a crew of 24. On May 19 the ship arrived at Montreal where the woman was given treatment by a physician but she was still ill when the ship was passing by Detroit. At Chicago she was placed in hospital and is being treated there for typhoid fever.

The necessary checks on food and drinking water on the boat were done. Rectal swabs were taken and no symptoms or signs of typhoid were discovered. The boat was allowed to proceed to Thunder Bay where it was again rechecked thoroughly by the Canadian authorities, provincial, municipal and federal, and the ship is still being kept under surveillance.

This would appear to be a case where the infection was picked up on or before the boat left Spain and presents a minimum of danger to the Canadian people. It is, however, a little disturbing to note that references to typhoid fever are creeping more and more into the news when proper sanitation and vaccination can control it.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AGREEMENT ON SECURITY OF WEST BERLIN AS PREREQUISITE TO CONFERENCE ON BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the right hon. the Prime Minister a question relating to our position during the discussions in Lisbon regarding NATO. Is it still a prerequisite to the holding of a European security conference as far as Canada is concerned that a security arrangement must be made with regard to West Berlin? Is this still a prerequisite in the view of the Canadian government, as it was last December when the NATO council took this position?