

Oral Questions

cury tests on Cree Indians in Quebec, and also assure us that these tests will be extensive?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is getting behind the latest developments in this field. Tests have been administered to the Indians of northern Quebec, in the Mistassini area. Certain of these have been examined by the Montreal Neurological Institute, which is certainly one of the most famous institutions in Canada, and further tests are being administered to the Indians of this area, in co-operation with the Quebec government to check if there is higher contamination than the one which we are aware of at the present time.

[English]

Mr. Neil: Mr. Speaker, would the minister tell us what new action he is taking to coordinate attacks on mercury poisoning and whether his department was involved in a federal-provincial meeting held recently by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and provincial authorities?

[Translation]

Mr. Lalonde: Yes, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I shall refer the hon. member to a press release which has been released jointly by the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and myself in which we stated all the measures which were taken by the federal government in this respect over the last few months. This report was made available to all hon. members. In addition, I participated at a joint meeting with my two colleagues and three provincial ministers from the Ontario government to set up a committee at the senior officials' level, at the assistant deputy ministers' level between our three federal departments and the three provincial departments so as to ensure an efficient coordination of our action in this area.

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[English]

TRANSPORT**ANNOUNCEMENT BY BRITISH COLUMBIA OF IMPROVEMENTS IN FACILITIES—EXTENT OF FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT**

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport and refers to recent announcements by Mr. Gary Louck, a minister of the British Columbia government. Since the commitment by that government to upgrade the construction of new roads, rail and port facilities in central-northern British Columbia to the tune of \$1 billion, and since this program includes innovation to the national railway and port systems, will the minister enlighten the House as to what extent his or any other department of the government is in accord with these announcements, and what federal plans there are in respect of this?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the announcement by Mr. Louck is very misleading, indeed, in appearing to suggest that any firm decisions or fundamental actions have taken place. There have been

[Mr. Neil.]

some preliminary discussions concerning a number of the matters to which Mr. Louck referred, but it is not even clear at this point whether the cost to remove the coal, to which he refers, will be greater or lesser than the value of that coal at present or foreseeable market prices. Environmental studies have barely begun and are nowhere nearly advanced to the point of a decision. In addition, the Indian claims question has not been dealt with. Indeed, the reference to the acceptance of the Neptune Terminals facility in Prince Rupert is completely premature since at this moment there is only a preliminary feasibility study being conducted on the Neptune Terminal, and there has been no further action than that so far.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, since any major development in the prime industrial or resource scene in central and northern British Columbia would depend on federal participation, would the minister report to the House today on any events that may have occurred since the signing of the umbrella agreement in March 1974 that might have encouraged the provincial government to make these announcements, and are there any studies going on that may bring these plans to fruition?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That seems to me to cover much too great an area for the question period.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS**STRIKE OF PULP AND PAPER WORKERS—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO AID SETTLEMENT**

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): In the absence of the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might direct my question to the Prime Minister. In view of the serious economic effect on communities of the strikes in the pulp and paper industry, will the Prime Minister provide leadership by having senior officials of the Department of Labour bring the two parties to the dispute back to the bargaining table, where good faith is not being shown by the industry under the guise of a misinterpretation of the anti-inflation legislation guidelines?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, these strikes are giving concern to a great number of people, including several members on this side, and for that reason we have tried to make it clear that the guidelines should not serve as a pretext to an employer or employees to avoid free collective bargaining. As to having the Minister of Labour bring the parties together, Mr. Speaker, this would seem an impossible step to take in an issue which is under the jurisdiction of provincial labour departments.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that this strike affects the federal government, not only because of a loss of one of our major exports but in that negotiations are not localized to any particular province, but affect Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and some of the western provinces, could an exception be made in providing the facilities of our senior officials in the Department of Labour to entice, if necessary, the parties back to the bargaining table?