

Oral Questions

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the issuance of these permits but I will be happy, as the hon. member requests, to look into the matter and get a report.

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TRADE**EFFECT OF REPEAL OF SECTION 272 OF RAILWAY ACT ON FLOUR AND GRAIN EXPORTS—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Has the minister studied the effect on Canada's flour and grain exports which repeal of section 272 of the Railway Act would have through passage of Bill C-87? If so, has the minister been able to come up with suggestions to overcome the harm that would occur to trade from eastern ports and to the flour milling industry?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I have had a number of representations on the subject and I am doing exactly what the hon. member suggests, namely seeing what the impact will be and also having discussions with the Minister of Transport and his officials on the issue.

Mr. McCleave: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister act quickly and announce that the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Transport will not be allowed to cut the throats of the ports of Montreal, Halifax and Saint John and of the flour milling industry?

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INDIAN AFFAIRS**MERCURY POISONING IN GRASSY NARROWS AND WHITE DOG RESERVES—EFFECT ON EMPLOYMENT—POSSIBILITY OF LEGAL ACTION AGAINST COMPANY**

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Can the minister report to the House the status of unemployment in those native communities where mercury poisoning has taken place; and specifically, what initiatives is the department taking to increase employment in light of this disastrous mercury poisoning which has so devastatingly taken away jobs in native communities?

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, a great deal of this unemployment was created prior to the mercury poisoning and as a result of the relocation of these communities. The situation now is that we have been working with the chiefs of the Grassy Narrows and White Dog reserves in an effort to tie together some manpower training funds from my colleague's department and funds from the welfare department. We are optimistic that by working with the chiefs and councils we will be able to

[Mr. Firth.]

make a significant impact on the current unemployment situation.

Mr. Malone: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister report to the House whether the jurisdictional question with the provinces has been resolved in regard to mercury poisoning in native communities; and specifically what obligations are being entered into by the companies that caused the mercury poisoning in respect of compensation to the native peoples?

Mr. Buchanan: In reply to the first question, Mr. Speaker, basically we are endeavouring to work directly with the native peoples. We have a co-ordinator for our department who is endeavouring to work with them and assist them in the creation of jobs. So far as the legal obligations of the company are concerned, I am afraid the situation is much more difficult. We have offered to assist the band in taking the company to court. However, there does not seem to be a desire on their part to pursue that course.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**GARRISON DIVERSION—POSSIBILITY OF STRUCTURAL CHANGES**

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question either to the Minister of the Environment or the Secretary of State for External Affairs; I am not sure into which category my question will fall. Since it is in connection with the Garrison diversion project in the state of Minnesota, perhaps it might be addressed to the Minister of the Environment. Have there been discussions between Canadian and United States officials on possible changes, structural or otherwise, to the actual physical building of the Garrison diversion project? If so, can the minister report to the House what these changes are?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I have met the United States ambassador and I will eventually meet the person responsible for environment in Washington to discuss all these problems.

Mr. Murta: A supplementary question. Might I ask the Minister of the Environment whether, following his discussions with his counterpart in the United States, he would agree to make a statement in the House to inform the Canadian people, especially people in Manitoba, exactly what the government is intent on doing so far as that project is concerned?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether a statement in the House is the best procedure, but I have no objection to making public any agreement that we reach together.