

Adjournment Debate

today about production of food, so this is the reason why I should like to ask the Minister of Finance to consider raising this exemption to at least \$600 and probably to 30 days.

Mr. Jack Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am advised by the Department of National Revenue that this matter has been raised frequently over the past years, but usually in reference to the Canada Pension Plan and Unemployment Insurance Acts, both of which contain provisions exempting workers in the primary industries from coverage provided they earn less than \$250 and work for less than 25 days with one employer.

However, what is being recommended tonight, in my view, would be most discriminatory in that it would be difficult to provide a certain segment of farm employees with an exemption of \$600 for purposes of reporting on T-4 returns and at the same time to justify such exemption to employers of casual workers in other industries where deductions for CPP and unemployment insurance are required from their salaries or wages without exemptions of any kind.

Furthermore, the present policy for income tax purposes requires a reporting on T-4 returns of all amounts in excess of \$250, or if tax, CPP or unemployment insurance is deducted, any amount paid as income from employment. Changing the reporting limits to the level suggested by the hon. member would result in a very substantial tax loss when applied to all workers. It is submitted that the limits would have to apply to all employees if the government is to avoid being accused of discrimination in applying the tax laws.

I made reference at the beginning to the fact that this advice came to me from the Department of National Revenue. Of course any representations made by the hon. member will be considered by the minister.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—ASBESTOS FIBRE COUNT OF WATER IN GREAT LAKES—REQUEST THAT INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION CONDUCT INDEPENDENT STUDY

Mr. Paul E. McRae (Fort William): Madam Speaker, I rise to discuss a question which I asked the acting minister of external affairs last week regarding the IJC and my hope that it will investigate more thoroughly the whole business of asbestos fibres in Lake Superior, particularly in the area of Thunder Bay.

● (2200)

There have been three distinct results concerning the number of fibres in Thunder Bay harbour and in the drinking water of South Ward, Thunder Bay. The Ontario Water Resources Commission recently did a test which showed .08 or 800,000 particles of asbestos fibres per litre; the Lakehead University did a similar test which showed 12 million to 15 million fibres per litre, about five times as great; and McMaster University did similar tests with results comparable to those produced by Lakehead University.

In 1973 the same Ontario Water Resources Commission had results of .08 or 800,000 particles per litre. Research in

[Mr. Whittaker.]

1973 gave four sets of results which varied from .06 or 600,000 particles to 12 million particles per litre.

It is very important healthwise that we find out what the correct readings are because there is a great variation between the lowest reading of .06 or 600,000, to 12 million particles per litre, and this variation is very pertinent from a health point of view.

Concentrations of about 7 million or 8 million particles per litre are likely to be very injurious, and I think it is important that we obtain accurate results through the IJC, or the CCIW; that is, the Canadian Centre for Inland Water Studies.

Most of the testing done by the Ontario Water Resources Commission was conducted by the Ontario Research Council, a body funded both by private industry, including Public Steel, which owns the taconite plant which is dumping some tailings which contain asbestos into Lake Superior, and funded or supported by the Ontario government.

There are two types of asbestos fibres Amphilab and Chrisotile. Apparently the amphilab fibres are similar to those from taconite at Silver Harbour where asbestos is being dumped into Lake Superior. The amphilab type appears to be particularly dangerous. According to Lakehead University and McMaster University the results they are getting at Thunder Bay at this particular time are similar to the results which are being found at Duluth, and the city of Duluth has warned its householders not to drink the water.

There is strong evidence that asbestos fibre counts of the order that are appearing, according to Lakehead University and McMaster, can have very serious results including carcinogenic or cancerous effects. It is thought in Japan, for instance, that the high rate of stomach cancer may be due to the heavy ingestion of rice containing talc, which in turn contains asbestos.

I would ask the government to undertake three or four things. First it should carry out a real study to find out exactly what the situation is, and to find out what the fibre counts actually are. Asbestos fibre counts can vary depending on weather conditions, winds, tides and so on. I think we have to establish norms, and we have not done so to the extent that they have done this in the United States in their studies.

I have also asked the Canadian government, and do so again, to accept a certain responsibility because of our position in respect of inland lakes and the Great Lakes, and also because there is strong evidence that these fibres may be coming into the water from the taconite plant at Silver Harbour on the United States side. I would also ask the Canadian government to make a concerted effort, through the National Research Council, and I understand the IJC has done the same, to determine the possible effects, and to set out tolerable amounts of asbestos fibres in our waters.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman, but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Len Marchand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, first of all I