

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, if a person is waiting for his cheque this matter becomes very important to him.

Mr. Hees: That is absolutely correct.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

LEVEL OF MERCURY IN HUMANS—USE OF BLOOD INSTEAD OF URINE TESTS

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry. I apologize for not giving him notice but I was unable to reach him by telephone. Since it has now been estimated that 1 milligram of mercury is toxic to the human brain, and since very grave doubts have recently been expressed on the reliability of urine tests to determine the level of mercury in humans who eat a steady diet of fish, will the minister consider resorting to blood tests which are much more accurate?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Mr. Speaker, I think this question should be directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. We are working closely with that department, of course. I believe it is dealing with the effects of mercury on human beings. We are confined to fish.

Mr. Rynard: A supplementary question, Mr. speaker. I direct my previous question to the minister's attention and ask whether, since this matter comes within the responsibilities of his department, he will get in touch with that minister and bring an answer back to the House?

Mr. Davis: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might say something further. The level of mercury in fish in Canada is a very small fraction of the level which was found, for example, in Japan where there was an effect on human beings. In other words, the levels in Canada are very safe levels indeed.

NATIONAL REVENUE

SEIZURE OF LETTERS BY CUSTOMS OFFICERS AT MONTREAL AIRPORT

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. I tried to give him notice of it. Has the minister investigated the incident at Montreal airport where it appears that his officials have seized or detained 140 letters written by American servicemen captured in North Viet Nam to their relatives,

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and other material in the possession of visitors to Canada?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Minister of National Revenue): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. Brewin: Can the minister give assurance that the provisions of the Customs Tariff Act relating to treasonable or seditious literature will not be employed as a means of censorship of material which expresses a critical view of the continuation of the war in Viet Nam?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member's supplementary is in the form of an argument or submission. The hon. member will have to assume that it has been noted.

[*Translation*]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PERU—ASSISTANCE TO EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): I wish to address a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

In view of the recent earthquakes in Peru where over 50,000 people lost their lives, can the minister tell the House whether this unfortunate country has asked for Canadian help and whether the government has dispatched relief?

[*English*]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the government has received requests and has responded, I think, in a very adequate and generous way. We are also considering further measures to help the people of that country who have suffered such a great disaster.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Fundy-Royal.

Mr. Fairweather: Mr. Speaker, my question has just been answered.

FINANCE

SPREAD BETWEEN PRICES CHARGED AND PAID BY BANKS FOR UNITED STATES DOLLARS

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I direct a question to the Minister of Finance. Is he aware of the exceptionally wide spread