

intra-provincial bridges and consequently it is the responsibility of the province to protect the pilings of those bridges. I understand that this is a rather difficult argument to carry to the limit, so we are looking at ways now where, with the co-operation of the provinces, it might be possible to attack this very interesting and important safety matter.

DEPARTMENTAL APPROACH

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Madam Speaker, in recent years hundreds and hundreds of lives have been lost in avoidable accidents. Of the 16 existing situations, seven are critical and four are extraordinarily critical. Do I understand the minister to be saying that he and his officials are attempting to develop an approach which will, in effect, result in cost sharing, or total absorption of the cost by the federal government, because it is a multiprovincial problem? Is the minister saying that in fact his department will look at this, and that it is perhaps something we might approach even as early as this summer?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, indeed I was being very cautious because this can be a rather expensive venture. However, in the last number of months, in the maritimes in particular, we have come to some kind of agreement with the provinces under which we are making savings in transportation and allocating those savings to other purposes in the area of transportation. So it is in that limited context that we are looking at it now. It is a question of substantial importance, I am very familiar with and aware of it, and like my hon. friend I think something might be done or could be done, and if something can be done I will try to do it.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS,
COOK ISLANDS, NEW ZEALAND

Madam Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of Mr. Javeta Short, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Cook Islands, New Zealand.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

USE OF AGENT WHITE DEFOLIANT

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the public concern which has been generated in a number of places in Canada regarding the use of the chemical Tordon 101 and Tordon 10K, by utility companies to control the growth of brush near power lines, can the minister say if this defoliant chemical, sometimes called Agent White, has been adequately tested so that her department can recommend it as being safe to use, and that there are adequate

controls on its use to ensure that it does not pose a public health hazard?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, that defoliant includes one element called Picloram which is on the IBT list. Replacement studies are under way in order to permit us to make a proper health assessment as soon as possible, but there is no reason, to our knowledge, for people to worry about Picloram being a residue on food because of its usage which is licensed and controlled by the provinces. In the case to which the hon. member referred, the province of Ontario has approved Picloram for roadside clearing, but only by licensed applicators. This will be in areas where there should be no population. The only warning which appears on the label is with regard to occupational safety, in other words, for those spraying with that pesticide.

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• (1450)

STATUS OF WOMEN

IMPACT OF MICROTECHNOLOGY

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for the status of women. This past weekend the minister will know that there was a very major national conference which brought women from across Canada to meet here in Ottawa to discuss their concerns about the tremendous impact of high technology particularly on female workers. Of course this revolution is happening now, but it will be worse in the future. Since most clerical and service jobs which employ primarily female workers will soon be automated, what plans does the government have to replace the massive job losses which will put some two thirds of the female work force out of work?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the government has already launched a task force which is investigating this very problem. The task force, headed by Dr. Margaret Fulton, has already met in Toronto and will be holding meetings throughout the country. In addition, we, that is, the status of women, as part of the field trials' operations in the Offices of the Future Program which was announced a couple of months ago, are very much aware of this impact on our monitoring and will be devising programs to look into the situation very carefully.

Mrs. Mitchell: I am sure that task forces are fine, but action is needed now. Both short-term and long-term plans by the federal government are needed now. We were told at this conference that retraining programs for displaced female workers are now practically non-existent or, if they do exist, that they are practically obsolete, such as secretarial training, for example, that few women can get into trades training and that women will be pushed into the low-paying, part-time, non-unionized jobs; this is their future.