

Oral Questions

Mr. Oberle: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. We know that the previous commitments were of a more minimum standard rather than the ironclad guarantees that the minister had previously insisted upon.

I apologize to the minister. I do not know; I am only taking my information from the press and I did not know who initiated the phone call.

Is it the intention of the minister now to insist on having from the administration certain guarantees in writing commensurate with the pipeline agreement or pipeline treaty that we have with the United States? Is he going to insist that these guarantees be issued in writing?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, the hon. member arrives very late in the game indeed. There have been very, very significant developments in the last six months between the parties concerned. The Northern Pipeline Agency, which is responsible for the construction of the pipeline, has been in regular contact and discussion with the parties concerned in the United States, the private sector as well as the energy department. Those discussions indicate that a great deal of progress has been accomplished in the full implementation of this project. There is no need for additional guarantees; the project is proceeding extremely well.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS**PENSION ENTITLEMENT OF RCAF VETERAN**

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs. I would appreciate it if the Minister of National Health and Welfare would listen as well, but I see she has left the chamber for a moment.

Mr. Bjarnie Paulson, an RCAF veteran of the Korean war, suffered tragically for 15 years from cancer all over his body which he attributes to his participation in the clean-up operation at Chalk River in 1958. Mr. Paulson has previously been denied a veteran's pension. Further, he was sworn to secrecy upon his retirement from the forces, and records, even to admitting his presence at Chalk River at that time, apparently have disappeared or have been expunged. As if multiple cancer were not enough, Mr. Paulson as well has had a long and bitter fight with the pension board.

Since his application for pension entitlement is now currently before the board, will the minister assure the House that this time his application will be treated promptly, thoroughly and compassionately?

● (1425)

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, we always try to show compassion and fairness on questions of veterans' pensions. However, I would like to remind the hon. gentleman that the pension commission is an independent body. It is very seldom that we get involved,

politically or otherwise. Nevertheless, I will take this subject to the president of the pension commission to make sure that everything is being done to treat this veteran with all the fairness and compassion he deserves.

* * *

HEALTH AND SAFETY**PROTECTION OF WORKERS EXPOSED TO RADIATION**

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. There were an estimated 600 military and non-military personnel involved in the 1952 and 1958 Chalk River accident clean-up operations. The Department of Veterans Affairs has released the names of 50 RCAF members involved. Of eight known civil defence workers who were participating in the clean-up, four have cancer, yet so far Atomic Energy of Canada Limited has refused to release any records of the personnel working at Chalk River at the time of the accident.

Since medical science is only now beginning to learn about the serious effects of long-term, low-level alpha radiation, will the minister of health insist that AECL turn over all pertinent records to the Department of National Health and Welfare? Will the minister instruct her department to begin a long-term medical study of all those people who were involved in Chalk River at that time, not only to protect them but to protect today's uranium miners and reactor station workers?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I am not sure that the procedure proposed by the hon. member with regard to the Chalk River workers and the confidentiality of their medical records is quite appropriate. But I will discuss the matter with my officials and make sure that, if an epidemiological study is required on the workers, it will be done either by the institutions making the request or by contract.

[*English*]

Mr. Rose: Madam Speaker, I understand the minister's concerns about the confidentiality of the medical records. I think permission could be given by those affected if we knew their names. I am not asking for the records to be released to the public but only to the minister's own department.

* * *

NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT**CALL FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY**

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, yesterday in the province of Ontario there was a major announcement concerning the expansion of nuclear energy in Canada. Since at the moment there is no safe way known to dispose of nuclear waste, and since it is estimated that Ontario