

DISASTERS

1985 GANDER AIR CRASH—HEALTH OF PERSONS WHO WORKED AT SITE OF ACCIDENT

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question concerns the Gander air crash. I will ask my first question of the Minister of National Health And Welfare.

The Minister of Health will know of the problems experienced by a number of Transport Canada workers, search and rescue workers, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and members of the RCMP who responded to the crash of the Arrow jet in December of 1985 which killed 256 people all of whom were American.

Will the Minister initiate immediately an independent medical examination of each person who worked at the crash site in order to determine what kind of health problems they have been suffering? We know of at least 24 workers who are suffering from various diseases such as rare blood disorders which are usually caused by the ingestion of toxic fumes.

Will the Minister order an independent medical inquiry? Will he do it now in the way the Public Service Alliance of Canada has been asking since yesterday?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in response to the Hon. Member's question, and just for the record, I should indicate to the Hon. Member that staff members of the Department of National Health and Welfare—and I have the names of the doctors and officials if Members of the House would like to know them—did work with employees who had been at the crash site immediately after the crash took place. The examinations were completed within two months after the incident. As well, instructions were given to medical staff for further follow-up.

I would say to the Hon. Member as well that National Health and Welfare is prepared to do whatever further testing or work is required. What we need is a formal request which might have taken place already—

Mr. Boudria: From whom?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): I said that it might have taken place as of yesterday. If we have not received a formal request, then obviously the testing cannot take place. As soon as there is a formal request we will take that action.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I take it that that formal request the Minister is talking about would be from the Public Service Alliance. I hope that that is the case.

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL—HEALTH TESTS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is addressed to the Associate Minister of National Defence. He will know that there were health tests done on Armed Forces personnel who participated in the work at the crash site and not on the other

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personnel who were there. Could the Associate Minister tell us what prompted his Department to carry out these tests? Why were only Armed Forces personnel involved? Why were the other people who worked at the crash site not tested as well?

Will the Minister and the Government order an independent commission of inquiry into the whole mess concerning the Gander air crash?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should know that Transport Canada and the Department of National Health and Welfare have primary responsibility in respect to any action or any testing to be done. The Department of National Defence has been co-operating fully.

What I say to the Hon. Member is what I said in my first answer. We have done testing. We have had people working with both medical staffs and the people involved.

Additionally, in view of the new allegations, statements or claims made yesterday, we are fully prepared to do further testing and to do whatever is medically necessary. The Department of National Defence, Transport Canada, the Department of National Health and Welfare or other agencies would be involved and willing to do that work.

As I said, when the Hon. Member talked about a formal request I meant a formal request from the public service union or from other bodies such as that.

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MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

REBUILDING OF CITY INFRASTRUCTURES

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. It is obvious from the analysis done by Angus Reid that people who live in our cities are less than enamoured with the current Government of Canada.

In the House on a number of occasions I have asked the Minister of Finance if he would be prepared to enter into a program with the provinces and the municipalities to rebuild our crumbling cities. I want to ask it once again. Will the Government now consider assisting the municipalities in a very expensive proposition to rebuild our sewers, roads, our bridges and parks? Will he consider that?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is ignoring the responsibility for this particular issue. What we have been doing in our four years in office was rebuilding the economy, putting it into a stronger and more solid position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!