

PENITENTIARIES

SUICIDE RATE—INQUIRY AS TO STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): May I address a question to the Solicitor General? Having regard to the extremely high suicide rate in Canada's federal penitentiaries, 23 cases since September and 80 attempts which failed, when does the minister expect to make a statement on this very important subject so that the present trend may be reversed?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I feel that it is not by making statements that we will solve this problem. This is an extremely complex matter, and one must consider, in our society, that the suicide rate is increasing more and more. This is obviously not an excuse that could justify the increase of the number of suicides in penitentiaries. Furthermore, statistics indicate that 50 per cent of the people who have committed suicide over the past 12 years have done so while undergoing psychiatric treatment, and during their first year of detention. In fact, we are conducting investigations on this. We do want an improvement, and the best way to achieve this would be to make more personnel available to the inmates—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the minister should be making a statement at the instigation of an hon. member.

[English]

Mr. Gilbert: Would the minister also examine the reasons for the high prison population in Canada—80 for every 100,000 persons compared with 60 in Sweden and 21 in Holland?

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TRANSPORT

OPERATION OF NEW DIGBY-SAINT JOHN FERRY PRIOR TO COMPLETION OF DOCKS

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): I should like to ask whether the Minister of Transport has consulted with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company with respect to the new Digby-Saint John ferry, and can he assure the House that the ferry will go into operation under temporary measures before the docks are completed in Saint John?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Yes, Mr. Speaker. This was among the subjects I discussed in Saint John, New Brunswick, on Monday. Since my return I have consulted with my colleague the Minister of Public Works. It is the intention of both my colleague and myself to speed up the work and also to make some kind of temporary arrangement so that the schedule can begin on time.

Inquiries of the Ministry

REQUEST BY SASKATCHEWAN PREMIER FOR INVESTIGATION OF FREIGHT RATES

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): I have a supplementary question. Will the minister accede to the request made last week by the Premier of Saskatchewan for an investigation into the freight rates in that province by appointing a royal commission to investigate freight rate levels?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): I am not certain as to the supplementary nature of that question. Mr. Thatcher has asked for a lot of things but so far he has not asked for a ferry for Saskatchewan. On the basic subject, we did make considerable progress in discussions with regard to freight rates in western Canada. Whether the route of a royal commission is the most logical or not, I am not certain at this stage in the discussions. There appears to be general agreement that the most productive route at this time might be to examine the rates for individual commodities and isolate those which are generating the most difficulty. This is the route I expect we will follow.

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POLLUTION

DISCUSSION OF CLEAN AIR BILL WITH PROVINCES BEFORE INTRODUCTION

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): I have a question for the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry. Did the minister or anyone in his department discuss the contents of the clean air bill with all the provinces before it was introduced into the House. If not, which provinces were not consulted?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Mr. Speaker, the proposed clean air legislation has been discussed in principle and now in terms of a published bill—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to interrupt the minister. The hon. member must realize that this is the first order of business today, and perhaps that is the time to ask this kind of question. We should not anticipate the order.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

ST. JOHN'S, NFLD.—REFUSAL TO PAY EMPLOYEES UNABLE TO WORK BECAUSE OF SNOW STORM

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Transport whether he is now in a position to reply to the question regarding the 500 employees of Canadian National Railways in Newfoundland who were deprived of a day's pay as a consequence of an emergency being declared arising out of a severe snow storm?