

Inquiries of the Ministry

[English]

POLLUTION

MERCURY CONTAMINATION OF FISH IN
LAKE ST. CLAIR

Mr. Mac T. McCutcheon (Lambton-Kent): Mr. Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry. Following the disturbing information given yesterday relative to mercury contamination of certain species of fish, particularly pickerel, in Lake St. Clair, can the minister say whether further tests indicate that harmful levels have been found in the other large catch in that area, namely perch?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Pickerel is the only species in which have been found amounts of mercury which might be deemed to be harmful. Other important commercial species such as perch are completely free of any of this contamination so far as we can determine.

Mr. McCutcheon: I ask the minister a supplementary question. Has any consideration been given, since the ban on pickerel fishing went into effect yesterday, to support the fishermen who depend on this fishery for their livelihood? Will there be something similar to what was done, for example, in Newfoundland?

Mr. Davis: Yes, this matter has been discussed with the Department of Lands and Forests in the government of Ontario.

Mr. Jack Cullen (Sarnia): My supplementary question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry. Has the industry responsible been told to curb this pollution, and has it in fact taken steps to do so?

Mr. Davis: The company which owns both of the plants in Sarnia was approached several months ago by the Ontario Water Resources Commission after we had begun our studies on mercury pollution. The company, was told in effect, to clean up the plants. One plant has done so and the other one is in the process of conversion at the present time.

[Later:]

MONITORING OF PLANTS USING MERCURY

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question about mercury poisoning. I ask the minister whether his department has a list of all the

manufacturing plants in Canada which use mercury in their manufacturing processes and might be a source of contamination. If so, are they being monitored for possible contamination?

[Later:]

Mr. Harding: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I directed a question to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry a few moments ago and I think he was not aware that I had put the question to him. Might I repeat it? Has his department a list of all the manufacturing plants in Canada which use mercury in their manufacturing processes and which might be a source of mercury contamination and, if so, are they being monitored by his department for possible contamination?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): The answer, Mr. Speaker, is yes. We have prepared a list of all chlor-alkali plants which use mercury, and these have been checked out by our fisheries research people or by the provincial departments with which we work.

Mr. Harding: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Does current legislation under the Fisheries Act allow the minister's department to handle the contaminants which are being put into the rivers, or does the act need amendment and, if so, will the amending legislation be introduced this session?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will recognize that his question is not in order.

CANADA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

INQUIRY AS TO LEGISLATION

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I direct my question to the right hon. Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister inform the House when he expects to introduce legislation setting up the Canada Development Corporation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I think it will be brought in within a month or two.

Mr. Thompson: Would the Prime Minister inform the House whether the government has reached a decision regarding the selection of a qualified person to serve as general manager or president of Denison Mines in the event of a takeover by the government?