

Oral Questions

tion with the investigations and examinations the minister is seeking or is sponsoring through his department. Is the minister aware that last month the journal *Science*, one of the most reputable scientific publications in the world, documented that the chemical dioxin, the cancer-causing product that we are talking about, is discharged into the environment from the combustion process of coal-fired power plants. Thermal power plants are one of the sources of dioxin, among others.

In view of those findings, will the minister assure the people of Canada that the government will not proceed with its plans to promote the conversion of electrical plants, in the Atlantic provinces in particular, from oil to high sulphur content coal until Canadian scientists have documented beyond reasonable doubt that those conversions will not increase dioxin discharge in the Atlantic provinces and elsewhere in Canada? Will he assure us that the Government of Canada will not proceed with its off-oil program as outlined in the minister's colleague's budget without a scientific determination that those conversions will not increase dioxin discharge in Canada which cause cancer and can cause very serious birth defects in humans, in addition to other problems?

Mr. Roberts: Madam Speaker, of course I am well aware of the hazards and dangers of that extremely toxic poison, dioxin. I was not aware of the article to which the hon. member referred. I thank him for drawing my attention to it; I will look at it. As has repeatedly been made clear to members of the House, the desirable proposals brought forward in the budget, and supported by my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, for moving to conversion to coal in the Atlantic provinces will proceed only in conformity with the highest standards of environmental protection.

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EXTERNAL AID**ITALIAN EARTHQUAKE—SUGGESTED FORMATION OF EMERGENCY NATO FORCE**

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs and concerns the ongoing tragic events in Italy. I am aware, of course, of the supplies which have been sent from Canadian Forces Base Lahr to Italy. However, the need now seems to be for greater co-ordination and co-operation in the actual earthquake area itself. In that regard, will the minister consider proposing to Canada's partners in NATO that they put together and make available an emergency NATO force which would help out with the logistics, distribution of supplies, reconstruction and other needs in the earthquake area? In the event that this initiative meets with success, will its availability be made known to the overtaxed government of Italy, itself a strong NATO member?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the intention of the hon. member. I would like to sound out the government of Italy on the acceptability of and necessity for such an offer.

They know that we have offered whatever will be useful to them. I think we should go back to them and put it in this larger context to see if such an initiative might be helpful.

SUGGESTED ADOPTION OF ORPHANED CHILDREN

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): I thank the minister for that response. I will pose my supplementary to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I am sure he knows that many Canadians, both those directly affected by the earthquake tragedy and those who are not, have expressed a great deal of concern about the plight of children orphaned as a result of the earthquake. In connection with the proposals the minister has put forward to provide resettlement places in Canada for those who have been left homeless by the earthquake, has he been in touch with his provincial counterparts to see whether methods can be worked out for the adoption of children who have been orphaned as a result of the earthquake tragedy? If he has not already done that, will he proceed to do so immediately?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): In the first instance, Madam Speaker, we thought that the best we could do was to respond to immediate requirements and ensure that those in Canada who have relatives in the affected areas would be able to have their relatives come to Canada, and that we provide the proper communications system so that they could make contact.

On the question of orphans from the earthquake area, we have had discussions with Italian-Canadian organizations here on that matter. My colleagues the Minister of State for Multiculturalism and the Secretary of State for External Affairs have been talking to the Italian government as well. Therefore, we have that particular question under serious consideration. As soon as those conversations are concluded, we think this is something that it is possible to do. However, we would like to work with the Italian government before we make a final decision.

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AGRICULTURE**DISCONTINUANCE OF BRIDGE FINANCING OF CANFARM**

Hon. John Wise (Elgin): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. It is with reference to the future of Canfarm. Recently the minister made a unilateral decision in which he discontinued the bridge financing of that corporation. This is the latest example of a broken commitment and broken promise. What is the status of that issue today?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has the right to say what he thinks is a broken promise. However, we made an agreement with Canfarm that they should have 12,000 members. At the present time they have 5,000. If anybody has broken a com-