

Adjournment Debate

protected by keeping a strict isolation on those people coming from West Africa until the incubation period of the disease is over, and that runs for a period of from 14 days to 21 days. I feel this should also be done because we do not know how an epidemic could come to the population of North America because there are rodents here, and yet we do not have Lassa fever. As I stated before the disease is very much like 'flu. Muscles and bones ache, and there is high fever and delirium.

I hope that the people who are put on an advisory committee with respect to health precautions at the Olympic Games will be people with skill and some knowledge.

I also hope that in another five years we will have learned much more about this disease, its diagnosis and treatment. In the meantime we should not subject the Canadian people to risks which are not necessary. It was with this hope that I brought this strange new disease to the attention of the House, and hopefully by doing so that will stimulate research, further study, and observation of this very interesting disease about which we know so little.

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I wish to begin by assuring the Canadian people that all precautions are being taken to protect them from this odious new disease, Lassa fever. As the hon. member indicated, it was discovered on the west coast of Africa, and it is believed to be spread by a species of field rat. While the primary source is believed to be the wild rat, there is also an indication that secondary infection can occur from direct contact with an afflicted patient. Health personnel working in a mission hospital in Africa have contracted the disease in this manner; however, spread of infection beyond these health personnel is rare, and it appears that such spread is unlikely.

Since Lassa fever was first discovered there has been no accidental transmittal beyond the borders of the west African countries other than a small outbreak which occurred in laboratory personnel who were involved in culturing and handling the live virus in the United States. One European, who contracted the disease in Africa, was evacuated by air to Europe from Africa, and no secondary infection of health personnel occurred in Europe.

With respect to the Olympic Games in Montreal in 1976, as the minister has already stated in response to earlier questions put by the hon. member, the government intends to seek amendments to the Quarantine Act to allow the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) to detain any person arriving in Canada from abroad who is suspected of carrying an infectious disease in either the incubatory or active state. These amendments will also safeguard the civil liberties of any person suspected of having a disease such as Lassa fever by requiring the minister to make an application to a judge of the superior court of the particular province within 48 hours, if the disease has not yet diagnosed, to request further detention.

A committee has been established with the provincial government of Quebec and the city of Montreal to review requirements for special precautions to arrest and prevent the spread of infectious disease should any prospect of danger arise.

[Mr. Rynard.]

I am pleased to inform the House that the federal government is also in close contact with the United States and United Kingdom authorities who have first hand knowledge of Lassa fever. Moreover, the Department of National Health and Welfare is in continuous contact with the World Health Organization, which monitors and reports outbreaks of infectious diseases on a global basis. Contrary to the fears of the hon. member, no interference from this world body is anticipated. Rather, a close, co-operative and harmonious relationship exists with the World Health Organization.

As I indicated previously, a committee is presently investigating the feasibility of developing a new isolation facility in which patients suffering from extremely infectious and dangerous diseases, such as Lassa fever, can be treated. The results of the deliberations of this committee should be available within the next few months.

May I conclude as I began by reassuring the Canadian people that all due precautions are being taken, and consideration of the problem is well in hand.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY—ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM—
POSSIBILITY THAT INSURANCE CORPORATION WILL BE
ADDENDUM TO AGREEMENT WITH BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I intervene this evening because the reply of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) to my question of February 5 was unsatisfactory. Usually the replies to that minister in the House are succinct and useful, but I am afraid his answer left a good deal to be desired.

My question was prompted by a meeting involving the federal Minister of Finance and provincial ministers of finance. After the meeting the federal minister issued a press release saying that certain minor difficulties needed to be worked out. A great many people in British Columbia hoped that the difficulty could be ironed out and that rates charged by the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia could be brought within the government's anti-inflation guidelines.

I did not ask the Minister of Finance whether the subject was negotiated or discussed; I asked the minister to go on record and say, on behalf of the government, that the rates charged by ICBC, a Crown corporation, ought to be brought under the federal guidelines and that the government would thereby offer relief to British Columbians who are being charged absolutely incredible insurance rate increases for the cars they drive.

The minister did not reply to that specific part of the question asking for an indication of the government's position, an indication vitally necessary if the government is to give some leadership in controlling inflation and the rates charged by ICBC. It is time the federal government and the provinces stopped playing their perpetual game of ping pong, stopped saying, "Shall we put it under the guidelines or not?"

I hope the parliamentary secretary can make some positive statement this evening on the government's decision to include ICBC in the addendum to the agreement made with British Columbia and make the Crown corporation a controlled Crown corporation. There is ample precedent for this. For example, the *Globe and Mail* of February 3