

Oral Questions

CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN—PROVINCIAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RATES

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister begin a concerted attack on poverty in 1988? Will he make poverty a priority at his next meeting with Ministers of Social Services? Will he also make it mandatory for provinces to report social assistance rates in the annual Canada Assistance Plan report so that it can be used as the basis of an attack on poverty?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I could repeat the answer I gave to the first question because the Hon. Member's second question is very similar.

I say to the Hon. Member that our work will continue along the lines of the success that we have seen in the last three years, in addition to programs which provinces want to initiate as they fall into the ambit of the Canada Assistance Plan. For example, we made changes in relationship to the use of the Unemployment Insurance Act and the moneys spent under the Canada Assistance Plan. Last year we came forward with a program for \$100 million. That has now been doubled. It is in those kinds of ways that more dignity is brought to those who are living in poverty.

The Hon. Member says that it is not a partisan issue. I always find it passing strange that she uses certain provinces rather than the entire country—she could also have used the Province of Manitoba and its rate—so that her questions to me would have more credibility.

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[Translation]

TRADE

POSSIBILITY OF GIVING PRÉCIBOIS COMPANY A TAX EXEMPTION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Since December 30, 1986, *PréciBois de Barraute*, in Abitibi, has been exempt from the 15 per cent export tax on lumber as it meets the criteria of the American questionnaire.

There is a rumor now going around Ottawa and the Quebec Department of Forests to the effect that this company will be penalized on January 1, 1988, and will have to pay 15 per cent on its exports to the United States. Is this true? Why not grant this company a tax exemption on a quota of 20 million board-feet for its exports to the United States?

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, Canada undertook negotiations with the United States last February to amend the agreement on the rough lumber trade.

Canada has tried to find a way to meet the request of the United States without harming the interests of the greater number of Canadian producers.

After completion of the negotiations, Canada accepted to put an end to the 20 individual exclusions to gain other exemptions which will benefit Canadian exporters in all provinces.

Unfortunately, two of the 20 companies which will lose their exclusion will be subject to the full rate of the export charge. Thus, all Canadian exporters will from now on be on an equal footing. It is also appropriate to note that the export tax rate of *PréciBois Inc.* will decrease substantially within a few weeks, after completion of our discussions with the United States on the value of the replacement measures introduced by Quebec.

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HEALTH

REQUEST FOR THE MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton-East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It has been three weeks since his Department established a link between the death of all laboratory mice and the presence of toxin in mussels. However, he said nothing about it to the public for four days. The behaviour of his Department has been characterized by chaos, total confusion and mismanagement.

I would like to ask him whether he does not think that he should resign to restore the confidence of the public in the Department of National Health and Welfare.

● (1240)

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, again that information has been put on the record all of these days. I have answered that question a number of times. I do not think it needs another answer.

RESTORATION OF CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): He has never answered, Mr. Speaker. While he said mice didn't die, his officials said all mice died. He said scientists were working all night through the weekend but his officials said they were not working through the weekend. The other Minister's aide said he heard about it at the First Ministers' Conference, yet he didn't hear about it until the Monday. New scientific evidence was coming through on the Tuesday and yet there was no new scientific evidence presented.

Surely the Minister must realize that there are enough questions that have not been answered by this Minister. The only way he can re-establish confidence in the public that his