

*Oral Questions***ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS****REASON FOR WITHHOLDING REPORT ON MERCURY
POISONING—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of the Environment. It relates to mercury poisoning, the Minamata disease, in parts of Northern Ontario and the report that was issued by the minister's department which was completed in 1972 and which mentioned the dangers of mercury poisoning in northern Ontario. The report was not released until 1975. I should like to ask the minister what was the reason for the three-year delay in telling the people of the dangers in the food they were eating and whether it is a continuing practice within the department to withhold from people information about things which seriously affect their health.

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am inquiring about that. I understand there was a preliminary report in 1972 which was completed afterward and published only in 1975. I hope I can get more information, but this is the reason I was given this morning when I noted this delay. I think that has been mentioned before the standing committee of the House on Environment and Fisheries.

Mr. Malone: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. In view of the testimony given last night before the committee to the effect that there was total inaction in respect of the health of the people, and that basically the action has all been directed toward monitoring, would the minister give some indication concerning what kind of approaches are intended so that we do not fall into the position of always trying to assess the health problems but rather will in fact be directly trying to improve the health of the native peoples in northern communities.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Yes, Mr. Speaker. This is what the report is all about. So far as other Canadians are concerned, we have very strict standards as the hon. member knows. Nothing can be sold above a certain standard which I think is about 0.5 or something like that. As to the rest of the report so far as the Indians are concerned, I hope I will have the information asked for and can inform the hon. member early next week.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS**REQUEST FOR RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN AIR
CANADA AND FINANCE BRANCH EMPLOYEES AT WINNIPEG**

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, in view of the absence of the Minister of Transport I have a question for the Minister of Labour. It is further to the questions asked by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. Is the minister aware that, rather than trying to meet its employees and reach an agreement, Air Canada is now taking steps to have the work normally done by its own employees in the finance department office in Winnipeg contracted out to CAE which in fact is hiring former Air Canada employees to do the work which should have been done and should be done now by Air Canada

[Mr. MacEachen.]

employees in the finance department? If he is aware of this will he take steps so that he and the Minister of Transport can try to get the management of Air Canada to sit down and negotiate seriously and amicably with its employees to reach an agreement.

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Yes, Mr. Speaker; it is my intention to have Air Canada sit down and negotiate an agreement with the employees. We are doing everything possible to promote that end. As to whether it would be helpful in achieving that end that I should comment on the observations of the hon. member preliminary to his question, I rather doubt.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of and would he inquire about the rumours that are going around Winnipeg to the effect that the company is preparing to lock out its employees? Does the minister consider that kind of action would require some very strong action on the part of the minister and his colleague the Minister of Transport.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I certainly will note the hon. member's observation, Mr. Speaker.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION**ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY—GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO
REDUCE DEFICIT—POSSIBILITY OF INCREASE IN TOLLS**

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I shall direct my question to the Minister of Finance, since the Minister of Transport is not here.

Considering that since 1959 the St. Lawrence Seaway has recorded nothing but deficits which now amount to \$815 million, could the minister tell the House what he intends to do to correct the situation and enable the St. Lawrence Seaway to operate normally as a business?

[English]

Hon. Ron Basford (Acting Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as Acting Minister of Transport I would be glad to take notice of this question and ask the minister to reply next week.

[Translation]

Mr. Allard: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

According to the president of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority, Canadian taxpayers seem to be subsidizing the Americans to a certain extent if we consider that last year only \$26 million were collected in tolls; since the operating cost goes on spiralling, would the minister be in a position to tell the House whether he intends to increase the toll rates?

[English]

Mr. Basford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that is an announcement that the Minister of Transport would want to make.