

The Address—Mr. Reid

restricted the development of our tourist industry which at present is probably the second largest employer of people in northwestern Ontario. In 1970 mercury was discovered in the English and Wabigoon River systems and the provincial government, acting in concert with the federal government, issued a series of directives. I wish to put these directives on record because they are interesting.

On April 6, 1970, Hon. Rene Brunelle, Minister of Lands and Forests, closed down all fishing, commercial and sport, in the Wabigoon River below Dryden up to and including Clay Lake. On May 1, 1970 Mr. Brunelle issued a statement which reads as follows:

I have initiated action which will close certain fisheries today. They are as follows: All commercial fishing in the following lakes in the territorial district of Kenora, Ball, Indian, Grassy Narrows, Lount, Separation, Umfreville, Tetu, Swan and Eaglenest. In so far as sport fishing is concerned, action is being withheld pending consultation by our health dept. Pending further advice, anglers are cautioned to refrain from eating fish from the lakes named in the Kenora district.

On May 14, 1970, Mr. Brunelle issued a further bulletin:

The sport fishing ban established in early April will be lifted immediately. Fish caught by anglers from these waters should not be eaten in the opinion of the health authorities in Canada and the U.S. The mercury in them makes them unfit for human consumption.

This was known as the fish for fun program. Anglers were encouraged to fish for sport, that is, to catch fish but not to eat them. They were to throw them back into the water.

On May 15, 1970, Mr. Colin Myles received a telephone call from the Ontario fish and wildlife department stating that fish from the river system must not be eaten. Then Hon. James Auld, Minister of Tourism in those days, is reported as having said:

In these designated areas fishing will be strictly for fun. This means no shore lunches or take-home stringers.

On May 22, 1970, Bulletin No. 1 issued by the provincial Department of Lands and Forests dealt with Ontario waters affected by mercury. It said there was no longer a ban on sport fishing in certain Ontario waters recently found to be contaminated by mercury but that all fish caught in these designated areas should not be eaten but returned to the water. In a letter of July 14, 1971, Dr. Sutherland, chief of the health studies department, said:

I have no hesitation in stating as my opinion that the fish from these waters should not be eaten.

In a further letter of November 16, 1971, Dr. Sutherland said.

I am informed by our Department of Lands and Forests that there is no evidence that mercury contamination in the fish has decreased significantly. We will recommend strongly that fish from these waters should not be eaten.

On February 28, 1972, Dr. Stopps, also of the health studies branch of the Ontario Department of Health, said: With calculations such as these, it is quite obvious that eating fish from the English River system would be hazardous to the health of camp guests.

This conclusion was confirmed by letter shortly afterwards by Dr. Richard Potter, the present Minister of Health.

[Mr. Reid.]

In yesterday's *Ottawa Citizen*, dated January 10, 1973, at page 36 there appears a report of an interview with Dr. D. G. Chapman, director of the food advisory bureau in the federal department of health. The report in part reads:

Mercury is extremely toxic in fish and any legal maximum levels for other foods probably will be "considerably lower" than the present 0.5 parts per million (ppm) guide now used for levels in fish, Dr. D. G. Chapman says.

It goes on to say:

"All evidence points to the desirability, from a health hazard standpoint, of reducing this level as soon as possible," he told the Ontario Council of Commercial Fisheries last year. . . .

"We're never too happy about a chemical as toxic as this in any food product and therefore we wouldn't want to establish even this level too firmly. We might want to see it reduced."

Dr. Chapman says in the article that there has been a series of experiments by the department of National Health and Welfare with cats. The animals have been fed regulated amounts of mercury in order to discover how much mercury is necessary to kill a cat, or at least to cause symptoms of disorder. They are now beginning to make important findings. According to the report Dr. Chapman says:

The symptoms, which come on gradually, include: Numbness in the hands, arms, lips and tongue; gradual loss of hearing leading to deafness; gradual blindness with loss of vision from the periphery or edges of the visual area leading to tunnel vision and eventual blindness; deterioration of speech; unsteady gait and general inco-ordination of limbs.

In cats, it has led to almost paralysis of the hind legs.

The point I am trying to make is that mercury pollution constitutes a serious problem in my area. Indian people, who habitually have obtained a great part of their living from the waters of the region through commercial fishing, still fish. Such fish still form a considerable part of their diet. Those Indians who were active in providing services to the camp owners as guides and workers in the camps and the camp owners are concerned because until this matter is cleared up satisfactorily the whole of the tourist business in my part of northwestern Ontario is under a cloud. Up till now we have been unable to get the provincial government, which has the primary responsibility for the fisheries and for the tourist industry, to take any action at all even though they recognize it is a serious problem. They have been unable to provide the kind of assistance and leadership which is required to deal with this problem fairly and equitably from the point of view of everyone.

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The Indians from the reserves of Grassy Narrows and Islington are most concerned about the situation. A great part of the diet of these people still is fish because it is all they can afford. They have been petitioning the Ontario government for some time to provide assistance and advice. The only thing they were told by the provincial government authorities is that women at a child-bearing age ought not eat any fish because of the potential damage to any child they might be carrying or which they might in future be prepared to carry.

In the Kenora district death by violence of the Indian people is one of the highest in Canada. There has been