

Oral Questions

the minister advise the House what steps he has now taken with regard to the mercury poisoning of the native population in that area since his on-site investigation in terms of the health of the native people in that area, and what steps he has taken to cause mercury pollution in the system to be reduced?

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, basically the reduction of the mercury in rivers is the problem of the Department of National Health and Welfare, and the Department of the Environment, but my understanding is that measures have been taken in that direction. It is the durability of the mercury currently in the river system which apparently will endure for 70 or 80 years that is the problem, as we indicated to Chief Andrew Keewatin when we were there. Probably the only sensible solution would be relocation, but the band is not prepared at this point to accept that option. That was the indication given to me.

Mr. Leggatt: Is the minister aware that Japanese scientists are now studying the long term effects of mercury pollution at Minamoto in Japan? Evidence may be given this afternoon to the Department of National Health and Welfare concerning that. Does he have a representative there to study that evidence and to seek action following that testimony?

Mr. Buchanan: I am not certain whether our representatives are there, but I am certain that the Department of National Health and Welfare is involved and we will provide any forthcoming information.

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HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONFERENCE IN VANCOUVER**

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and it concerns the United Nations conference on human settlements to be held in June of next year at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. In view of the fact that thousands of delegates from nations around the world will be in attendance, and in view of the enormous logistic problems in providing housing and security for the delegates, can the Prime Minister say who in Canada is in charge of the conference, Canada being the host country, and what progress has been made on the mammoth task of organizing this conference?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will discuss the matter with the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs to try to ascertain which group is in the specific control position.

[Mr. Leggatt.]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**INQUIRY AS TO OPINION ON LEGALITY OF WITHHOLDING GRANTS TO MARINE INDUSTRIES**

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice and it has to do with the request that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has made to him for an opinion regarding the holdback of grants to Marine Industries Ltd. and the government's position with respect to the matter. Has the Minister of Justice had an opportunity to deliver an opinion with respect to the propriety of holdbacks to the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): A number of questions arise in connection with a potential civil liability, and while we have formed certain opinions and had preliminary discussions, we are continuing to look at the specific situation of the different applications for payments which may come forward.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Is the minister in a position to undertake to report to the House on that matter before the Easter recess?

Mr. Lang: It may well be possible to give more precise indications about whether or not a specific type of payment is being proceeded with before that time.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF PORTS IN CONNECTION WITH LOWER CHURCHILL FALLS HYDRO PROJECT—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In view of the massive hydropower development taking place in the lower Churchill Falls area, can the minister indicate to the House whether, under the general development agreement with Newfoundland, studies are being made to create ports coincidental with that development and in order to support the development? I refer to the port of Corner Brook.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): In point of fact, yes, Mr. Speaker. I am not certain whether actual details have been settled as yet with the government of Newfoundland, but we have indicated our willingness in principle to help fund a study to determine what development should take place in Corner Brook. Incidentally, there may very well be some implications of that same study for another port in the hon. member's riding, namely, Stephenville.