

Oral Questions

The fact is that we have now a stronger law than we have ever had. CEPA will equip the federal authority with a much stronger instrument to deal with PCB-type contamination and pollution than ever before. However, there was no implication from the Minister, from me, or from anyone in my Department that accidents will not occur.

The federal Government is totally committed to identifying PCB storage sites right across the country under federal jurisdiction and under provincial jurisdiction, to now ensuring that they meet the most rigorous national standards for storage.

To the extent that national standards in that connection are not met in a given province, I assure the House and the Leader of the NDP that the federal Government will take all necessary steps under its authority, which is now much broader than before under CEPA, to make sure that the job is done.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that, despite the verbiage he has just put on the floor of the House, the correct conclusion is that the expert was right yesterday and not the Minister of Labour. The Minister knows that the regulations are not in place which would give the federal Government the authority to act. When the Minister of Labour said what he did to the House yesterday he was leading all the people of Canada astray because the authority to act is not now in place, and the Minister should concede that.

● (1430)

AGENDA FOR DESTRUCTION OF PCBs REQUESTED

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): I want to ask the Minister a supplementary question with regard to an answer he gave just a minute ago. He said that, notwithstanding the Government's tardiness in terms of preparing regulations, the regulations it would have out soon would be pertinent to the storage of PCBs. He said nothing about the authority of the federal Government in the June Bill to destroy PCBs.

He knows, and experts in his Department no doubt have told him, that technology exists now to destroy all the PCBs in Canada within six months if we had the will to do it. Why does the federal Government not give us an agenda for the destruction of all PCBs, and give us that agenda now?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the agenda is, first, to identify all storage sites for PCBs across the country. Second, it is to ensure that each storage site meets the highest standard for environmental safety. Third, it is to work with the provinces to ensure that with dispatch, to the maximum extent possible, given the technology, the PCBs in those storage facilities are incinerated. Finally, we are going to do all we can as a federal Government to ensure the technology is available and in place and used.

I might add, in conclusion, that I will be convening a meeting of the Council of Resource and Environmental

Ministers to ensure that those four points I have identified are carried through.

CONTENT OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, the country has been waiting some three years for the Government to live up to its promise on this. The Minister just now made reference for the first time in the House this afternoon to the destruction, as I understand him, the incineration of the PCBs. Is he now guaranteeing to the House that the regulations will include a requirement not simply for the storage of PCBs but for their destruction? Will the federal Government lay out a timetable so the people of Canada, at long last, can rest assured that definite, concrete action will be taken?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Leader of the New Democratic Party and, through him, the House and the country that we have a phase-out strategy in the advanced stage of preparation. I am in a position to present it to my provincial colleagues. That is the first priority, to phase out PCBs in use in the market-place.

In tandem with that, we will have a strategy, again well advanced, to identify the storage sites and arrange for their immediate or very soon incineration.

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RAILWAYS

NEWFOUNDLAND RAILWAY CLOSURE—SITUATION OF WORKERS

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, there are 1,000 employees of Canadian National in Newfoundland who are presently facing an uncertain future because of the actions of the Government. There are 600 employees of Terra Transport who are presently negotiating their future because the railway will close in a couple of weeks. There are 400 employees of Terra Nova Telecommunications, a Crown corporation that was sold just last week to its only competitor, Newfoundland Telephone.

First, the 600 employees of the railway only have 30 days left on the job.

My question is directed to the Minister for International Trade who signed this agreement and made the announcement on behalf of the Government of Canada. Where have all those glorious promises gone? They evaporated into thin air. Why will the trainmen, the people who work the train, including the engineers, no longer have any job security? They are told to go to the mainland to work the spare board. Why is it that 150 permanent part-time workers, some of whom have been with the company for 25 years, are not even covered by the agreement? Will the Minister step in to stop this railroading of rail workers in Newfoundland and at least extend the lay-off deadline?