

Oral Questions

excess of scientific caution and a paucity of common sense and urgency.

Was there any other reason in the world for stopping the shipment of mussels on Sunday than the demonstration of the presence of a toxin in mussels on Friday, mussels that were already on the market? If it was justifiable to stop shipments, it was therefore justifiable to warn the public that there were mussels on the shelves already that contained the toxin.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Very quickly, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure the Member as a professional would also recognize that the test that was done was on the paralytic shell poisoning test and he knows the details as to how that test affects mice, for example, in the tests that there were done. What we do not have, and to this day—and he as a microbiologist would also know that the evidence today that the toxin still has not been isolated. Surely he as a microbiologist, in his professional experience, did not have instantaneous information but used the lab, his microscopes, used his analytical machinery to try to get exactly those answers. Surely that is what he did every day of his life in his professional life, and that is what we have done.

REASON FOR NOT ISSUING PUBLIC ALERT OVER WEEKEND

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, all of this pseudo scientific gobbledegook has missed the point of the question all together. There having been no tests carried out since, was there any reason at all, other than the fact that mussels from the Montreal episode were tested and found to kill six out of six mice, for stopping the shipment of mussels on Sunday? The mussels on the market were those in which it was demonstrated there was a problem, not the mussels still to be tested.

If the shipment of mussels that were not on the market yet and on which no tests were carried out were to be stopped, does it not make sense to warn the people that it has been ascertained that some of the mussels on the market which have made people ill are potentially there for people yet to consume? Would it not have been appropriate to say that there are mussels on the market that contain something that kills mice at least?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. gentleman—I can only repeat the answers that I have given and that is the testing that was done, in the minds of the scientists, that that was not conclusive to the point that he has taken it, that is that the Hon. Member has taken it in Question Period. Obviously that is why additional testing took place. That is why additional street work took place, investigatory work took place. I have laid that all out in front of the House, in front of the country, and I think the hon. gentleman has to accept it that that is what professionals with 18 years of experience in the case of Dr. Todd, that is what they were doing.

LABOUR RELATIONS

AIR CANADA STRIKE—REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT APPOINT MEDIATOR

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Labour my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. It concerns the Air Canada labour dispute which is a matter of concern to a great many Canadians.

In spite of the fact that negotiations have started again, will the Deputy Prime Minister give the House his assurance that in the event the Government senses that rapid progress is not being made in the negotiations toward a settlement, the Government will immediately appoint a mediator in this dispute?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, the two parties got together last Wednesday, I believe. To my knowledge the talks are continuing and I think that should be a good sign. This occurred as a result of an initiative taken by the Minister of Labour.

Obviously the Minister of Labour is watching the situation very closely and, as he has indicated in previous times, he will be prepared to assist in any way to expedite and facilitate a satisfactory resolution to this unfortunate situation. I can only assure the Hon. Member that that ever watchful eye of the Minister of Labour will continue to observe the situation and I am sure he will be providing the encouragement for a quick settlement.

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HEALTH

TOXIC MUSSELS—RESULTS OF MICE TESTS—INFORMATION NOT PROVIDED TO MINISTER

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It is a very serious situation we are in here today, both as far as the industry is concerned and indeed as far as consumers are concerned.

On Friday, November 28, at 7.00, all the mice that were tested died in the labs in Ottawa as well as in Black's Harbour, New Brunswick. Now the Minister is trying to cloud the issue just a bit here, because he mentioned there were 336 mice tested and 93 had died. To date 336 mice have been tested, and he is absolutely correct that 93 have died.

• (1150)

But up until Sunday there were only the mice tested only in Black's Harbour and the mice tested in Ottawa, and each and every one of them died. The Minister states that the testing