

Oral Questions

procedures that are in effect, given the importance of this matter to public safety?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I am looking into it. In fact there is a study on conditional release which I will be making public sometime soon, which examines this and other forms of conditional release of inmates. I think conditional release is a justified form of program for inmates, when you consider that almost all of them are eventually returned to society. This type of program gives them an opportunity to be released under supervisors with some attention to their reintegration into society. That is what was happening in this case.

● (1450)

I cannot imagine a change which could be made in the future which would completely eliminate the risk that we take which, as I indicated, in the case of these temporary absences is a very small one. In the case of Kehoe, the only offence that was committed was the escape. As far as we are aware, no other offences were committed by the individual during the two days he was at large.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

SALE OF DRUG PARAPHERNALIA ON OPEN MARKET

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. There is some concern across the country with regard to the establishment or development of a number of so-called "head shops", stores which sell drug paraphernalia. Attorneys general of the provinces, of whom action has been requested, have indicated that this is a matter of federal concern. Does the minister plan any legislative initiative with respect to the curtailing of this kind of activity and the availability of drug paraphernalia on the open market?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I will look into the matter. I am not in a position to give the hon. member an answer today.

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HEALTH CARE

PROVISION OF FEDERAL SERVICES TO JAMES BAY CREE INDIAN BANDS

Mr. Lorne Greenaway (Cariboo-Chilcotin): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare and concerns the impending withdrawal of federal health services from the James Bay Cree tomorrow, March 31, 1981. The minister has told this House that "as for the health of the Cree, wherever we have the slightest responsibility, we fulfil it completely. I monitor the situation once a week." If she is indeed doing so, weekly, why did her officials tell us at a

meeting of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs on Thursday, March 25, that there was only one case of tuberculosis in the village of Mistassini when in fact Dr. Elizabeth Robinson, a medical practitioner, reported finding seven active cases and 20 suspects fully two weeks before that date?

Is the minister receiving the correct information from her officials? Is she fully aware of the deplorable lack of sanitation facilities and services in the villages, facilities and services that were promised by the governments of Canada and Quebec upon signing the agreement?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has asked two questions regarding the transfer of health facilities to the Cree health board and the province of Quebec. The agreement includes seven parties. I discussed the possibility of obtaining a legal waiver from the Cree to make us free of any legal responsibilities, but that does not cover the right of the other six parties to the agreement.

I have asked the Minister of Justice to review the situation once more. The way the agreement stands, and because the province of Quebec has lifted the trusteeship of the Cree health board and is ready to receive the transfer, I must execute it. By the way, the Cree lost three injunctions against us in this matter. In other words, I do not have the choice the hon. member suggests.

As to the cases of tuberculosis, I am satisfied from information I have received from Dr. Lyall Black, the Assistant Deputy Minister in charge of medical services, that the hon. member's figures are wrong.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Lorne Greenaway (Cariboo-Chilcotin): Madam Speaker, I disagree with the last part of the minister's answer. We spoke to two medical doctors who were up there last week. They definitely found seven active cases at Mistassini and are treating 20. This was reported in the Montreal press on two occasions. I disagree wholeheartedly with the minister's figures. A way out of this could be Section 5 of the National Health and Welfare Act which reads:

The duties, powers and functions of the minister extend to and include all matters relating to the promotion or preservation of the health, social security and social welfare of the people of Canada over which the Parliament of Canada has jurisdiction—

In light of this, will the minister reconsider withdrawing these important services from the Cree tomorrow?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I suppose the hon. member is referring to the general mandate of the Minister of National Health and Welfare. When we talk of the specific situation in northern Quebec which follows the James Bay agreement, we talk of an agreement signed by seven parties, I repeat, which forces me to transfer facilities according to a calendar worked out with the Cree some time ago and which includes the transfer by March 31 of some facilities in some communities. I