

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Munro: That is in the age group 25 to 29. The memorandum from which the hon. member for Skeena quoted did not point out that there has been a decrease in mortality among infant and school age Indian children. It is in this particular age group, 25 to 29, that we have experienced the great increase which is so disturbing.

Mr. Orlikow: A supplementary question to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact this report states that the rising mortality rate amongst adults is associated with suicide and violence and indicates serious social dissatisfaction, will the Prime Minister on behalf of the Treasury Board give favourable consideration to an increase in the funds available for working with this group of people?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it necessarily follows that you prevent the suicide rate from increasing by providing more money from the Treasury Board.

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I think it is safe to say that the high mortality rate amongst native people can be directly related to the lack of proper medical facilities, particularly the lack of doctors' services. I have had personal communication with the minister by way of letters. I want to know whether he is still objecting to the idea of a flying doctor to serve the isolated northern communities?

Mr. Munro: If I might reply, Mr. Speaker, the same report, the intradepartmental memorandum, shows that the Indian mortality rate is more favourable than the white mortality rate in some of the Maritime provinces. Maybe the hon. member could draw the same inference from that and say this is a serious reflection on the administrations of certain Maritime provinces, both present and past. All I would argue—

Mr. Hees: Name the provinces.

Mr. Munro: The Maritime provinces generally.

Mr. Hees: Name the provinces.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest that the minister and the hon. member who asked the question should not debate the matter. Some latitude is being exercised and will continue to be exercised in connection with such an important matter, but not in the form of a debate.

[Mr. Hees.]

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): A supplementary question to the Prime Minister. When requesting the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to make a statement tomorrow on the suggestion that a committee should be set up, would he indicate the reasons why the government fears to have this matter investigated by a committee?

Mr. David Lewis (York South): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I understand from an answer the minister gave earlier that the first memorandum was dated October 20 and the second memorandum was dated about the end of November—

Mr. Munro: November 25.

Mr. Lewis: November 25. May I ask the minister whether the second memorandum was sent by the director on instructions from those above him, including himself and the deputy of his department?

Mr. Munro: No, Mr. Speaker. Instructions were not given by anyone above him to send either of the memoranda. I talked to the Acting Director General today and he advised me that he noticed the error himself in his earlier memorandum. He sent it out. I learned that today.

Mr. Lewis: The minister referred to an error. As I heard him read the alleged correction in the second memorandum, it still remains true that the ratio was roughly five to one, 2 point something as against .7. The ratio was still five to one except there was a reference to infant mortality. Will the minister tell the House and the people of Canada what the correction is supposed to be and whether the decrease in infant mortality offsets the increase in adult mortality?

Mr. Munro: No, Mr. Speaker. The decrease in infant mortality and mortality among school age children does not offset the increase in this particular group. That is what is pointed out in the second memorandum which has been tabled. What it does point out is that there are 381 deaths per 100,000 amongst Indian women compared with 69 deaths per 100,000 in the whole population. As anyone can see from comparing those figures, that is not five to one.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): I would like to ask the minister if he would name the Maritime provinces in which he said the mortality rate was higher than among the Indian population?