

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned with this situation and I intend to discuss shortly with the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association the possibility of taking measures of a special nature or, at least, in addition to those already taken in this regard.

[*English*]

Mr. John Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary to the minister on the same question. Has the minister considered whether there is any federally-funded money going into amateur junior hockey which could be withdrawn if the organizers of amateur junior hockey are not prepared to cut out some of the violence and cease encouraging brutality in our national sport?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, it is not my habit to work with threats and blackmail against people who are receiving funds from the federal government. I believe they are reasonable people and I hope that in negotiating and discussing the matter with them we can arrive at better results than by using threats to cut off public funds.

Mr. Fraser: The minister refers to blackmail. I ask him whether, in view of the obvious public concern about what is happening, the organizers of amateur junior hockey should not be informed that the public will not continue to support them with taxpayers' money unless they clean up their game?

Mr. Lalonde: I said in French before the hon. member spoke that I hope to meet with representatives of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association in the next few days to discuss this very matter. I repeat, however, I do not think that when dealing with responsible citizens we should confront them with the threat of cutting off public funds at the first opportunity. I think there are better ways of dealing with people.

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CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**COAL MINERS' ACCIDENT RATE—REQUEST FOR INQUIRY**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. In light of information that in the coal mines operating in Cape Breton under the Cape Breton Development Corporation the accident rate in 1971 stood at the appalling figure of 109 per cent and that in 1972 it was 90 per cent, can the minister tell the House why he has not conducted an inquiry into this very serious situation?

● (1150)

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me notice of his question. I would advise him that officials of my department have been working very closely with management, union leadership and so on at Devco for some considerable time in regard to the accident rate which the hon. member has identified and which is very disturbing indeed. Various efforts have been made. I am not complaining about lack of co-operation, but the accident rate has not come

[Mr. La Salle.]

down, as is well evidenced by the figures. As a result, I have decided to appoint a commissioner of inquiry to look into the situation. We are working out the terms of reference for the commissioner with management and the union leadership, and we are getting co-operation in that regard.

Mr. Muir: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the minister for his reply but may I put a supplementary question. First, how soon does he think the commissioner will be appointed and get under way with his investigation? Second, in view of the fact there were between 2,600 and 3,000 employees in 1972 and there were 2,300 accidents, 1,900 of them disabling, would the minister send officials from his department to Cape Breton immediately to ensure that safety standards are being adhered to and so the number of human beings being maimed and slaughtered will be reduced as quickly as possible?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I would repeat that it was prior to the hon. member bringing this situation to my attention in the House that action was taken by my department, in co-operation with other departments, to do something about this. The negotiations and discussions have not materially reduced the accident rate and this is the reason I decided to appoint a commissioner of inquiry. As to when this will be done, all I can say is it will be done very immediately indeed. I expect the appointment to be made within the next few days; if not, within the next two weeks.

Mr. Muir: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, to have to take the time of the House again, but this is a very important matter. I should like to ask a further supplementary question of the minister. The minister stated that he has been attempting through his officials to reduce the number of accidents by negotiating. Can he advise me what reaction he has received from the officials of Cape Breton Development Corporation, and to what have they laid the cause for such a tremendous increase in the number of accidents? Also, are they co-operating to reduce the number of accidents?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is aware of this situation so far as the Cape Breton Development Corporation is concerned. All I can say is that we cannot complain about lack of co-operation from Devco management, or from the union leadership for that matter. I think there is a genuine desire on the part of both to reduce this accident rate. Some of the problems may be very deeprooted indeed, and it is because of this that we hope a commissioner of inquiry will be able to get to the bottom of them.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**ALLEGED UNAUTHORIZED INVASION OF APARTMENT OF PAUL DESBIENS—RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION—SUBSEQUENT ACTION**

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Solicitor General a question. Several weeks ago I raised the matter of the unauthorized invasion