

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

EFFECT OF MERCURY POLLUTION ON HEALTH OF INDIANS—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

In view of the minister's responsibility towards the native people, could he say what measures his department is taking to solve the problem resulting from the mercury pollution of some rivers? We know that much of the fish the Indians eat is mercury poisoned. Can the minister say what steps he is taking?

[English]

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, measures are being taken and being examined jointly with the provincial government, which has responsibility in this area, to provide alternate sources of suitable protein for the people involved.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR CONCERTED ACTION BY GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENTS TO STOP MERCURY POLLUTION

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question.

I would like to ask the minister, since his colleague the Minister of the Environment stated in Miami Beach on October 7 last that the best procedure was to make haste slowly, whether he could use his influence to ask his colleague of environment and the Minister of National Health and Welfare to exert pressures jointly. Three departments, I think, are involved in this problem. Steps must be taken to prevent any irreparable injury to those people who consume large quantities of fish contaminated by mercury.

[English]

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to pursue the matter with my colleagues.

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TRADE

CONSULTANT'S CONTRACT WITH ROY McLAREN—EXAMPLE
OF GOVERNMENT RESTRAINT

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce but first of all may I congratulate him on being promoted to take over the best department in government. My question is one of which I have given him notice and I am sure he will have an answer for me. Was a Mr. Roy McLaren of Toronto recently taken on by his department with the purpose of improving the department's image with the Canadian business community at an annual salary of \$50,000 a year, with an operating allow-

ance of \$40,000 a year, and with no requirement to move from Toronto to Ottawa?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for giving me notice of this question and also for his kind words. I agree with him about the department. It has been improving substantially over the past seven, eight or nine years.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: With a start like it had, it could not help but improve.

Mr. Jamieson: With regard to Mr. McLaren's contract, I will be very glad to send the hon. member the details of it. Essentially it is a \$50,000 a year contract for two years. However, that is the gross amount. In other words, there are no fringe benefits or anything of that nature involved, so it is substantially less than that in actual retained earnings. I might also say, by the way, that he took a substantial reduction in income in accepting the position.

In so far as expenses are concerned, they are fully accountable. There is a ceiling of \$20,000 annually. He cannot spend more than that for travel or any expenses of that nature. As to whether he will in fact live in Ottawa, no firm decision has been made on that but he has the choice of remaining in Toronto or moving to Ottawa. If he is going to stay in Toronto and commute, there are the normal transportation allowances, etc. that are paid in all such cases.

On the last point, Mr. Speaker, it is not so much a question of improving the department's image. As I believe the hon. member knows, there has been a great deal of interest lately in having a closer liaison with the business community, particularly in relation to the international turn key projects, overseas missions and the like. It will be these in large part upon which he will be concentrating.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time it has ever been found necessary to improve the department's image with Canadian businessmen, a very sad state of affairs, and I can assure the minister that in the past the department always had a very good image with Canadian businessmen, will the minister indicate whether this is the government's idea of cutting down on unnecessary government expenditure and setting an example of restraint for the Canadian people?

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member means by the department's image having been better in the past that he is better looking than I am, I am completely prepared to agree with him.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: On the other hand, let me assure the hon. member, as I said a moment ago, this is not by any means an image building operation. I can assure the hon. member if he is interested that there is a very important necessity for closer liaison, particularly in terms of Canadian businessmen getting to know how the various new programs, including the turn key projects, and overseas and develop-