

Adjournment Debate

other aspects of hospital care. That might be the problem, or there may be some other reason. I hope we do find the answer.

The assistant deputy minister of the Department of Veterans Affairs, W. B. Brittain of Ottawa, is quoted in the *Chronicle-Herald* of last Saturday as saying that "financial restraints"—that is, the current program with which we are now dealing in our business here—"have not been an issue yet in the matter." It is also noted in the same article by Miss Barbara Hinds, that the armed forces have declared themselves out; that is, they do not want to form a part of that particular complex. But this was known by myself, and I am sure by many other people, at least a year ago, so that the decision of the armed forces could not have been the reason for the delay in going ahead with the plans for Camp Hill.

The province is probably being consulted. I do not know why it is not making a decision as to whether it would have an interest in the long term future of the hospital, but the minister of health for the province, Mr. William MacEachern, at one time known very well and favourably here in the press gallery, said:

The DVA has always said they would be proceeding with the project whether the province took part in it or not.

Quoting him again from Miss Hinds' article, he said: "It is unclear if Ottawa is going ahead or not". Finally, to quote the Dean of Medicine at Dalhousie University, Dr. Lloyd B. MacPherson:

The metro area has a far lower ratio of beds to population than any other part of Nova Scotia—

And remember, we also have a lot of referrals from all other parts of the province.

In short, given the fact that there does not appear to be an austerity reason for the delay in building this hospital, there must be other reasons, but I am damned if I know what they are. I hope that when the parliamentary secretary replies he will be able to give me and the people in Nova Scotia the assurance that that hospital will get going very shortly.

Mr. S. Victor Railton (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) has covered the historic questions and negotiations concerning this matter extremely thoroughly. For a long time there have been under way long range plans for the rebuilding and rehabilitation of Camp Hill hospital and eventual negotiations with the University of Dalhousie. In view of, shall we say, my inexperience with veterans affairs procedures, I ought not to make any statement which I have not discussed with the minister. I therefore hope that the prepared statement in my hand will satisfy the hon. member. If not I will take the hon. member's remarks as notice and discuss them with the minister.

I am happy and pleased to be able to speak on behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) in replying to the question asked by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants on the subject of the proposed Camp Hill hospital complex in Halifax.

Planning by the Department of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with the consultants who were appointed some months ago and with planners from Dalhousie Uni-

versity, has been proceeding in the usual way. Within the next month the minister hopes to have preliminary proposals as to the nature of the new active treatment part of the hospital. That, I think, is fairly clear.

The proposal which we made was that we would develop plans for a 400-bed active treatment unit based on the premise that the government of Nova Scotia would ultimately accept that Camp Hill hospital should be transferred from the department, for the benefit of the community, subject to our reserving adequate numbers of priority beds for veterans and the transfer of our staff. In fact the Minister of Veterans Affairs was speaking today with the provincial minister of health for Nova Scotia and I can assure you, indeed, that discussions are moving forward on this matter.

If the hon. member wishes to raise further questions, I shall be pleased to bring them to the minister's attention.

Mr. McCleave: I shall write.

HEALTH—POSSIBLE REVISION OF MAXIMUM LEVELS FOR MERCURY CHLORIDE AND PCB

Hon. Stanley Haidasz (Parkdale): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly evident that we are living in a period of environmental disease. Increasing urbanization and industrialization, especially expanding technology, have altered our environment to such an extent that humans, animals, and plants are being exposed to an ever-growing number of harmful pollutants.

Recently a medical scientist at the National Cancer Institute stated that cancer in the last quarter of this century can be considered as a disease whose cause and control are rooted in the technology and economy of our society. Last week a biochemist and research worker at McMaster University in Hamilton was quoted in a newspaper article as saying that environmental effects cause up to 90 per cent of cancers and that current efforts are directed to a cure rather than elimination of causes.

In view of these remarks and mounting evidence of new toxic substances poisoning the environment, a comprehensive investigation of environmental pollutants should be undertaken by our governments in co-operation with university and industrial scientists without further delay. The eradication of present harmful pollutants and the prevention of toxic substances in future will not only contribute to the improvement to health but also reduce the cost of our hospital and medical programs and save many man hours and years in our industries.

The alarming statistics and new revelations of the harmful effect caused by environmental pollutants prompted me on October 14 to inquire of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) whether any revised maximum permissible levels for mercury chloride and poly-chlorinated-biphenyls have been decided upon by officials of his department. In his answer the minister revealed that results of recent studies in the U.S.A. on the harmful effects of PCBs are causing serious concern for his department, and that his officials are examining the advisability of introducing standards which may be even more strict than those in force in the United States.