

Minister unaware of rabies policy

By ALF STONG
MPP-York Centre

Some two weeks ago on Sunday morning at 9 a.m. I met with a group of ratepayers from the Baif subdivision, who in the company of Councillor Mike Burnie, sought a solution to the problem of rabies in that area.

I was advised at that time that the people had been in contact with the Ministry of Agriculture concerning this matter and that the policy of that Ministry was to allow animals suspected of rabies to be quarantined in the homes of the owners.

This represents a severe danger to the area and as a result on October 18 I asked the Minister of Agriculture about this situation.

As I reported in Hansard I asked the following question: "In view of the reported incidences of rabies among household pets would the minister review and reverse the policy of his ministry which allows quaran-

ting of those suspected animals in homes rather than animal pounds, particularly as it applies to urban settings with the inherent danger to the community at large, if not to the owners of such animals?"

The Honourable Bette Stephenson in one of her more astute observations interjected "balderdash".

The Minister of Agriculture, The Honourable William Newman answered my question as follows: "With the high incidence of rabies that we have in the area — many areas out there have the same situation — there are some safety factors involved in trying to have the incubation period in the home. That's a very dangerous sort of a situation. The animal should be separated from any person and kept away from the home, and to suggest that it is kept in one's home for the incubation period is inviting trouble. Certainly I don't want to change that around."

I then interjected "That is exactly what I wanted reversed. That's the policy of his ministry which he stated. That's happened, and I'm asking him to reverse that situation — to require animals to be quarantined in pounds rather than the homes."

This situation lent to some light moment in the House particularly when the Honourable Minister was obviously unaware that his ministry had adopted that policy. He is no doubt aware of the situation now and in his own retort took a stand opposed to the policy of his own ministry and hopefully this situation will be corrected by virtue of the indication in Hansard.

There has been considerable debate in the Ontario Legislature on the subject of the planned lay-off of 2,800 Sudbury workers by Inco—which, it is predicted, will actually mean a loss of some 6,000 jobs in the Sudbury area.

One reason put forward for this loss of employment is the fact that Canada and Ontario's share of the world nickel market has dropped rapidly in recent years, as other areas have developed their deposits.

In 1966 this country's share of the market was 51 per cent; it had declined to 34 per cent by 1975.

Opposition Parties have urged that the Legislature's Committee on Resource Development should go to Sudbury to hear local submissions and to discuss

the matter with municipal and labour officials.

House Leaders of all parties have been meeting to organize a Select Committee on Ontario Hydro, and establish its terms of reference.

The Liberal view is that the entire operation of Hydro should fall within the scope of the committee, including the extent of direct Government control over the Crown Corporation and such currently controversial matters as the over-runs on the Bruce County heavy water project cost.

Liberal Leader Stuart Smith believes that the committee should be able to call expert witnesses and employees from such projects.

It is thought that there may be some overlap with this Committee's work and that of the Porter Commission on Hydro's long range planning, which is intended to deal with Hydro projects from 1985 onward. Further development of nuclear plants in the province will obviously be of interest to both groups.

Questions on the subject of the Bruce heavy water cost over-runs were asked in the House this week.

When the Minister turned aside requests for cost and progress reports, Stuart Smith charged that he was out of touch with the problems, and should consider resigning.

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