

*Statements by Ministers*

Chair, permission to ask a certain question, which of course was not the case.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair has listened carefully to the intervention of the Hon. Member, and to other comments.

Fairly recently the Chair indicated to the House that the Chair is very much aware of the fact that there are a great many Members in this Chamber, many of whom have legitimate and diligent questions to put to the Government. I think the Chair has made it clear that when that is the case, and when it is obvious to the Chair that that is the case, questions have been allowed to members of the government side. I am quick to point out that when those questions are what they ought to be, that is diligent and searching, members of the opposition have not objected, for which I am grateful.

The Hon. Member is understandably concerned that because of attention on the Question Period, and perhaps because sometimes the Question Period does not move as rapidly as I am sure Hon. Members would like because of the length of questions and the length of responses, perhaps government Members are neglected. I will strive to ensure that that is not the case.

However, I want to say to government Members that the Chair is aware that they, too, are here representing constituencies and that they, too, have a right to speak. Hon. Members will have noted that not only has the Chair recognized government Members, whose names were not necessarily on a list brought to the Speaker, who rose and showed to the Speaker that they indeed were seeking recognition on an important matter, but the Chair has also recognized supplementary questions from government Members, as in fact was the case today.

With respect to the other point, Question Period is a unique institution. At its best it is something of which Canadians can be very proud. At its best it is an intelligent accountability session for any Government—at its best. It is not always at its best, as Hon. Members know. But that is my problem and I have to do what I have to do to ensure that Question Period is at its best as often as possible.

The comments of Hon. Members are important, especially the comments of the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme), that this is our institution and it has customs and traditions which are unique to us. While sometimes visiting dignitaries from other lands may wonder at the way we meet, usually after lunch, nonetheless it is our institution for better or worse.

The Chair, while recognizing that all Hon. Members have a right to be heard during Question Period, also recognizes that it is very much an accountability session. That is our tradition. I thank the Hon. Member for raising this matter because it is an appropriate time for the Chair to say something about it. I will endeavour to be as fair and as even as I can be, recognizing that Question Period is an accountability session and that

there are serious and proper questions coming from government Members. I shall try to see those government Members when those questions arise.

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. For the benefit of the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse), there is an ultimate solution if he wants to ask more questions. He could join the Opposition, preferably the Liberals.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** I should have known that there was no way we would get through this discussion without some help from the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**PRIVATIZATION****FISHERY PRODUCTS INTERNATIONAL**

**Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Privatization)):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to address the House today, and I am delighted to see your honourable self looking so elegant.

I am pleased to make an announcement in the House today on behalf of the Government. The shareholders of Fishery Products International, the Government of Canada, the Government of Newfoundland, and the Bank of Nova Scotia have agreed to proceed with a plan put forward by FPI to return the company to the private sector.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs. McDougall:** The privatization will include a public offering of shares which will provide an opportunity for all Canadians to participate in the ownership of this company.

The sale of FPI is the culmination of a remarkable success story in Canada's Atlantic fishery. FPI was created in 1984, pursuant to a restructuring agreement between the Governments of Canada and Newfoundland to integrate the operations of several seafood companies into a single new company. A key objective of the agreement was to restore the profitability of the offshore fishery and return the company to the private sector at the earliest possible time.

We believe that the company's records show that the time is now appropriate. The company realized a profit of \$46 million in 1986. I take this opportunity to congratulate warmly the workers and management of FPI for their dedication and contribution.

The privatization plan announced today will provide key benefits to the Newfoundland fishery. As part of the privatization plan FPI employees will participate to the extent of approximately \$6 million in the share offering. The shares will