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forced to pick up the tab.

The provincial fisheries minister, Leger, says the expenditures "didn't hurt us that much," but there's no doubt that development of lagging regions isn't helped by insufficient or unplanned spending. Billard gave the example of the province hiring a high-salaried planning officer to implement the programs and who had to handle other work because the sub-agree-



Leger:

Absence of federal funds 'didn't hurt us that much.'

ment wasn't signed. For some time this officer was being paid from a budget that hadn't been approved.

He described working with the federal government and attempting to deal with jurisdictional disputes which were "so bloody cloudy."

"The sadness of it all," he said, "is that many worthwhile projects aren't going on" because there's no agreement.

Another important factor is the lack of sufficient funds for the federal department. He echoed the words of an employee of the Community Improvement Corporation—a provincial development body also involved in negotiations for the sub-agreement—that LeBlanc "has too many irons in the fire." LeBlanc, said Billard, is "into other things" such as unemployment benefits revision for fishermen, maintenance and acceptance of the 200-mile limit and the plan to convert the Fundy herring fishery to food.

Billard said federal financing for development projects "is nervous at best", that "they give some here but take some away there" so that LeBlanc ends up working on a limited budget. The federal fisheries minister mentioned lack of sufficient funds as one reason why the agreement hadn't been signed.

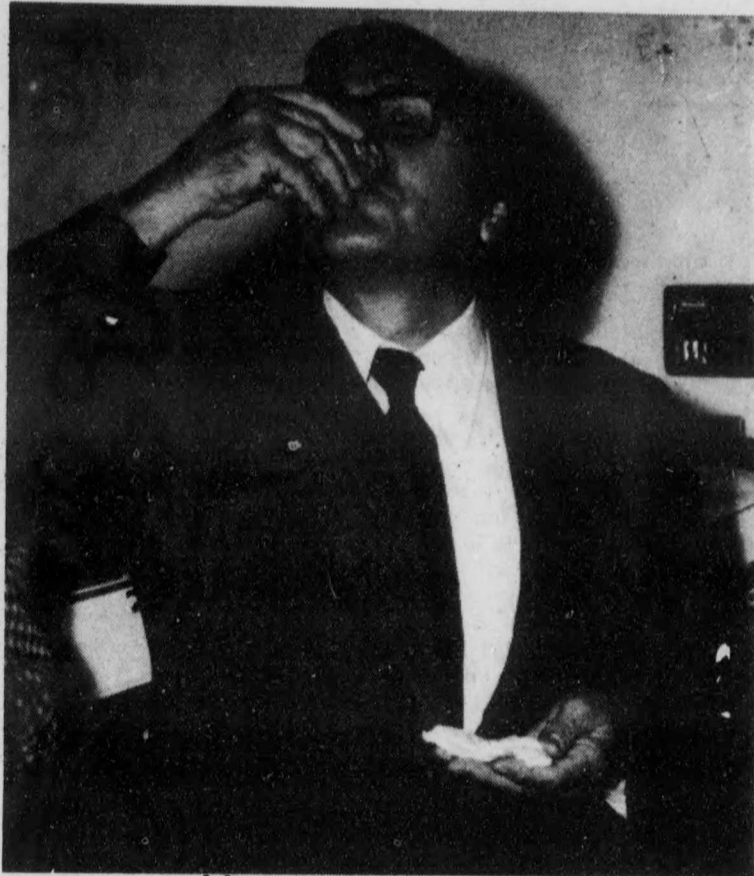
The former fisheries officer also criticized the federal fisheries department for being "extremely unavailable" while planning was going on for the sub-agreement.

Where Billard did blame LeBlanc, was in the matter of being explicit about federal funding of the agreement. The federal government handles 80 per cent of the costs of such a sub-agreement and this has both advantages and drawbacks, he said. While it avoids duplication of services and programs introduced by the federal and provincial governments, he said, it leaves approval of the programs up to the personal whim of the federal minister of fisheries.

He said many projects initiated by the provincial minister were blocked by LeBlanc, who withheld the necessary funds.

"Romeo is screwing the provincial department right down the middle," he said.

LeBlanc said the problem was a combination of insufficient budgeting for his department and failure of the provinces to agree on having the federal government take responsibility for overseas marketing. He said the provinces want to continue to sell through numerous



Leblanc supping oysters: "Romeo was screwing the provincial department right down the middle."

outlets and that this will only have Canadians competing against each other. He says there's no jurisdictional dispute, that the line between federal and provincial powers is well defined. He says the provinces can license processors, inspect catches and educate fishermen. "Everything else is federal jurisdiction," he said.

The provincial minister of fisheries says there's hope that the sub-agreement will come into existence but says he's not too optimistic.

Billard doesn't think the sub-agreement will ever be signed. "I don't even see Romeo solving the whole problem of jurisdiction," he said.

Meantime, while the squabble over jurisdiction and funds continues, the Maritimes fisheries continues to decline.

DREE stays close-lipped on progress of talks

The Brunswickan attempted to contact the department of Regional Economic Expansion to get some indication on the progress of the negotiations for the sub-agreement. Parties involved in the discussions included DREE, the provincial Community Improvement Corporation and both departments of fisheries.

A Brunswickan reporter was put in contact with Ron Williamson who identified himself as a senior development officer with DREE. After some questioning, Williamson said he had sent a report which included his interpretations of the arguments of the CIC and the provincial fisheries department with comments to the director-general of his office, Gilles Chaisson. From Chaisson, said Williamson, it "was pushed on up the line" to the deputy-minister for the region, from that office to the deputy ministerial staff in Ottawa and then shown to the minister. At that point, the report would be returned down the line to Mr. Williamson with various comments, questions or changes.

The Brunswickan asked Williamson when the report had been sent and when word could be expected on what happened to it.

He said he couldn't say. "Don't you know when the report was sent?" asked the reporter.

Williamson replied that it was "a little difficult to trace" because many such items cross his desk and that he really couldn't say. The reporter asked if this meant he wasn't allowed to say. Williamson said no, he just wasn't about to say, that material related to such negotiations were kept confidential because the talks were sensitive. He finished by recommending that The Brunswickan speak to the director general, Chaisson. Chaisson said he wasn't sure what Williamson was referring to by a report on the negotiations and was unable to contact Williamson before The Brunswickan went to press. Chaisson said the DREE had made a proposal for the sub-agreement but that acceptance of the proposal was conditional on completion of

"a full review of the national fisheries policy" being carried out by the federal department of fisheries.

The review has already taken two years, he said.

Chaisson said he was not in a position to make a statement on the national fisheries policy. "The sub-agreement will have to conform to the new policy," he said, "But I can't elaborate beyond that."

The reporter asked if this meant in fact that DREE was waiting for the federal department of fisheries to act on the sub-agreement. "Well, if you consider that we're waiting for approval that our proposal for the sub-agreement conforms to the new federal policy then I guess you'd have to say...yes."

He said he was not in a position to say whether the proposal conformed to the new policy and for that reason was unable to predict when the sub-agreement would be considered and returned to his office.

"We'll have to wait," he said.