

Oral Questions

operations of other departments of government the quality of physical volumes moving will also be watched.

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TRANSPORT**ALLEGEDLY INADEQUATE SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATION AT HALIFAX—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport arising out of the very tragic drowning of two men in the northwest arm of the Halifax Harbour yesterday afternoon, although they hung on to their boat, apparently, long enough to be rescued had there been any adequate, integrated rescue plan in operation in the harbour, and although there were, apparently, appropriate boats ready to do the job had they been notified and called upon to do so. Since this harbour comes under the jurisdiction of a board within the minister's department, I should like to ask why there does not appear to have been an adequate, integrated search and rescue operation available for situations like that.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the hon. member for having given us notice of his question. I certainly share his feelings about the very regrettable nature of the incident. We will be investigating the very question which the hon. member has put to see if indeed there was a deficiency in co-ordination, and whether we can ensure against it in the future.

Mr. Stanfield: Might I ask the minister what sort of investigation he will launch? Will he launch quite an extensive inquiry into what happened rather than simply making informal inquiries himself? Will he launch at least a quasi-formal inquiry as to what actually transpired and with authority to recommend what needs to be done to avoid the danger of a recurrence of this kind in the future?

Mr. Lang: I will take steps to determine the facts, which is necessary, and I will not prejudge what further action is required until I have all the facts. There are a number of agencies involved, and it is a problem of co-ordination. I will be glad to report from time to time about the nature of my inquiries, the conclusions I have arrived at and any action I recommend.

PROPOSED INQUIRY INTO INVOLVEMENT OF HALIFAX SEARCH AND RESCUE CENTRE IN LOSS OF "SAN JUAN"—DATE OF DECISION

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the same minister. A short time ago he advised the House that he was considering the facts surrounding the loss of the fishing boat *San Juan* and the response of the Canadian coastguard at the Halifax Search and Rescue Centre in that particular tragedy in which two fishermen were lost. He gave an undertaking that he would take under advisement the possibility of holding a public or judicial inquiry into this tragedy. Has he reached a decision on that yet?

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Not yet, Mr. Speaker.

DATE OF REPORT OF TASK FORCE REVIEW OF SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the same minister. In view of the fact that there are lifeboat bases strategically located in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland which supposedly look after such rescues, and in view of the fact that it has been indicated that the lifeboats which are provided in these bases cannot even cut through two inches of ice, I wonder if the minister has received the task force report on the review of rescue policy and when we will get the results of that investigation. What action is the minister taking to investigate the lack of capability of these lifeboat bases?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, work on the question of co-ordination of our whole rescue effort is still under way, and I do not have at this point a final report.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE**LOCKHEED CONTRACT—DATE MINISTER AWARE OF MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT FINANCING**

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. The minister recently denied saying that Lockheed had misled his negotiators, but rather that there had been a misunderstanding with regard to financing. Could the minister advise the House just when he became aware of that misunderstanding?

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would say it was when we reached the final stage of the contract, which was being negotiated by my colleague in the Department of Supply and Services. It became clear at that time that Lockheed was not going to be able to provide the financing, as we had understood it would be able to do.

Mr. McKinnon: When I asked the minister to be specific about the time, I should have liked to have had it in days, months or years, not in a nebulous framework that this House has never been advised of, for example, the way the negotiations were going. Would the minister please tell us the date he became aware of the misunderstanding?

Mr. Richardson: From memory, the cabinet decision to purchase the Lockheed long range patrol aircraft was in late November, and I made an announcement to that effect in the House. It would have been during the month of December, 1975 and early January that the final negotiations of the contract were taking place.