

*Inquiries of the Ministry**(Translation):***TRANSPORT****SOULANGES CANAL—INQUIRY AS TO FEDERAL DISPOSAL**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Marcel Bourbonnais (Vaudreuil-Soulanges): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Transport.

Could he inform the house whether he has received recently a bona fide offer or an official request on the part of some minister of the Quebec government with regard to the purchase of the Soulanges canal for the establishment of a fish-breeding centre?

Does the minister feel it would be advisable to hand over to the provincial government, under present conditions, the entire property of the Soulanges canal for the amount of \$1, as the minister of youth in the Lesage cabinet has expressed the wish in his newspaper?

Does the minister believe—

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is customary to ask only one question at a time. Perhaps the hon. member would allow his first two questions to be dealt with.

(Translation):

Hon. Leon Balcer (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, the Quebec minister of youth and welfare wrote me, on behalf of his colleague, the minister of game and fisheries, to inform us of the province's intention to acquire the federal property along the Soulanges canal in order to set up a park and a fish breeding station. I have also had a visit from the minister of youth who gave me some details on the intentions of the provincial authorities.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, I had occasion to visit the spot, and I found that the local people have expressed a wish that part of this property be reserved for development and industrial building. Many municipalities on the banks of the Soulanges canal have also made known their intention to approach the government to obtain certain pieces of land which they deem essential to their expansion.

Mr. Speaker, I should tell the house that this is a very important property. I believe it is possible to meet the needs of the riparian municipalities as well as those of the people concerned and the provincial government.

As far as the proposed setting up of a fish-cultural station is concerned, I can assure my hon. friend that our only aim in that

[Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

transaction will be to help the public in general and the riparian population of the Soulanges canal.

Mr. Bourbonnais: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question?

Does the minister think it would be better for the Soulanges area to establish a bird sanctuary, as suggested by the minister of game and fisheries, rather than promote the establishment of industries which would give employment to the people of Vaudreuil-Soulanges?

Mr. Balcer: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we want this property to become a sanctuary for human beings, and there is room both for industrial development and a fish-cultural station or a bird sanctuary.

Above all, we want to make sure that the interests of the people will be preserved, and that will be our first consideration.

Mr. Maurice Bourget (Levis): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a supplementary question to clarify the situation.

Since the Soulanges canal will no longer be under the Department of Transport jurisdiction, is it not true that it will be declared a surplus asset and transferred to the Department of Defence Production?

Mr. Balcer: Mr. Speaker, the provincial government's proposal included an offer to buy the whole property for the sum of \$1, regardless of the needs of industry or of the various municipalities. Following my visit there, and following various representations made to me by residents of the area, we had to reconsider the whole matter, and I think we can now submit to the provincial government a concrete proposal that will meet all the wishes of the population.

Mr. Bourget: Another supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I believe—

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think this matter has been pursued with four supplementary questions. If it is not sufficiently clear I could perhaps permit another question, but it seems to me that the matter has been fairly well canvassed.

Mr. Bourget: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, may I say I was just trying to clarify the situation. Here we have a situation where a certain property or installation is not presently used by the Department of Transport; therefore it should be transferred to another department for disposal. That is the situation that I should like to clear up.