

*Oral Questions*

## GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Madam Speaker, as welcome as the aid is, because it is an important plant, I have to ask the minister is it now the policy of the government to take over uneconomic plants directly and operate them in this way, or is this merely a move to bail out his colleague, the Minister of National Revenue?

**Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Madam Speaker, I think that the hon. member's experience should really not allow him to get away that easily with that question. For example, he knows that we came to the assistance of the Grand Banks and the Gaultois operations when that company presented a business plan which was discussed with the bank and members of the Kirby task force. We found a solution. We made it very clear that it was a temporary solution while longer-term restructuring was taking place.

We met with the company and it made it very clear that it did not want to operate St. Anthony. We made it clear that we would come in with some form of assistance. They asked for something, I offered what they were asking for, and then they wanted something else. I simply had to find a solution to give the fishermen of that area enough hope that they could sell their fish as well as giving some plant workers some support for a year. We will see what happens in the restructuring.

## CLOSURE OF FISH PLANT AT GEORGETOWN, P.E.I.

**Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. It also relates to the catastrophic state of the Canadian Fisheries industry. For example, H.B. Nickerson and Sons Limited of Prince Edward Island have shut down their Georgetown Seafoods Plant, eliminating nearly 400 jobs at one fell swoop.

The Prince Edward Island government has devised a strategy, and proposed it to the federal government, that would require the federal government to permit a fish quota for the plant in question large enough to make it profitable. Is the minister planning to accept the Prince Edward Island government's proposal since it is a reasonable one? If not, why not?

**Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Madam Speaker, in 1969 there were licensed vessels which brought fish to this plant which were sold to H.B. Nickerson Limited. They were moved to another part of the Maritime provinces. This policy was accepted at that time and there was, in fact, no absolute limitation of licences even on that size of vessel.

I made it clear in 1974 or 1975 that the dislocation of traditional landing patterns would not be allowed by a wholesale move of licences from one area to another. Unfortunately, the proposal made to me by the Prince Edward Island government would have implied dislocation to another area in the Maritime provinces. This left no room for substantive negotiations with the company which has the control of those licences at the present time.

In light of that proposal, which simply was not workable, I have been waiting for other proposals. I have been willing to try to sustain Georgetown if serious negotiations were to take place with H.B. Nickerson in an attempt to divert some fish to Georgetown. That proposal has not been brought forth yet.

## ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough):** Madam Speaker, if the minister is not prepared to accept the eminently reasonable proposal of the P.E.I. government to keep the Georgetown Seafoods plant open, even though that proposal is approved by Nickerson and Sons Limited, the company concerned, does the minister have an alternative plan to protect the jobs at Georgetown Seafoods? Does he at least accept the principle that such plants in the region must be kept open and that the federal government has a vitally important role to play toward that end?

**Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Madam Speaker, I very much hope that the information which those questions appear to convey is very carefully examined. The fact is the proposal which was presented to me would have, or could have meant serious dislocation to plants in another area of the Maritime provinces, in this case Cape Breton.

I made it very clear that I was willing to exert some authority to ensure that the normal flow of fish which had been coming to Georgetown over a number of years would continue. Unhappily, the proposal which I had before me would have meant taking licences away very arbitrarily from one area to put them into another area of the Maritimes. I am afraid I could not do that.

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## HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

## STUDY OF LONTREL

**Hon. Bud Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As commendable as the agreement is between the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of National Health and Welfare to protect Canadians from the impact of chemicals and certain herbicides, has the minister had an opportunity to study with her department the product called Lontrel which was developed by Dow Chemical, and which increases the yield of a field by some 30 per cent? This product is being used by our competitors in other countries. People who use this product would be quite prepared to sign any kind of release required. Has the minister had an opportunity to study whether or not this particular product might be made an exception?

**Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Madam Speaker, with respect to this problem which the hon. member has raised with me on several occasions, according to the actual rules of the game in the department