

that some minority shareholders decided to put forward an initiative. They knew for over a year of the problems of nationalization, but up until then they suspended making any gesture. The reason the private sector proposal succeeded is that the federal Government helped them improve their offer and convinced the bank to accept their proposal. We have played the most important role in having the private sector solution accepted by the banks.

As for the scallop fleet, the agreement which has been reached between all the different parties is that part of that fleet will belong to the Newfoundland company. The jobs will be based in Nova Scotia, as they have been in the past. Conversely, the Nova Scotia company will have several plants in Newfoundland and will be creating jobs in Newfoundland. Both companies will have assets in each province.

Mr. Crouse: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for his answer.

SALT FISH MARKETS

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same Minister and is in regard to another area. Due to the decrease in Canada's share of the world salt fish markets, which are seriously depressed at present, fishermen have diverted their catches to the fresh fish market in New England, thereby creating a pricing problem for all fish. Is the Minister aware of this situation? If so, what steps, if any, is he planning to take to improve markets for Canada's salt fish in order to diversify our marketing opportunities and assist our fishing industry through this difficult economic period?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is asking what I am ready to do to improve the markets for salt cod. I am very proud to report to the Hon. Member that recently I led a delegation of businessmen to Portugal. Due to our representations, and my insistence, Portugal has decided, for the first time, to consider Canada as its major source for imports of salt cod. Fifty-five per cent of its domestic needs will be filled by Canada. This is really a breakthrough.

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● (1450)

PENSIONS

PLIGHT OF ELDERLY SINGLE WOMEN PENSIONERS

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As the Minister knows, the National Council on Welfare issued a report entitled "Sixty-Five and Older", which affirms what we have known for some period of time. It is that 60 per cent of all elderly women who live alone are living in poverty, in so much as they qualify on the GIS. While the report reminds us of that, the Minister has known for the last three or four

Oral Questions

years—as long as I have been here—that that condition exists. Will the Minister advise the House what she intends to do to alleviate that poverty of those single elderly women, both in the short term and the long term?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the best as possible, as soon as possible.

Mr. Young: That is not a satisfactory answer at all, and it will be of no comfort to those women who are looking for some help in this rather serious situation.

REQUEST FOR EXPANSION OF CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, the Committee on Pension Reform and the Minister have indicated in the past that what is really needed is an expansion of the Canada-Quebec Pension Plan so that those elderly Canadians can be assured a fair share of Canada's wealth. I will ask the Minister again when she will come to the House to give us a timetable that she intends to follow in order to bring an improvement to the public pension plan system, so that those elderly Canadians who need help the most will receive it.

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member is referring specifically to the report of the parliamentary task force, as he seems to be in his second question, I think he knows that this is being studied by the Government. We intend, as we have always said, to proceed as rapidly as possible.

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HEALTH

INCIDENCE OF BIRTH DEFECTS IN WEST TORONTO

Mrs. Ursula Appolloni (York South-Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. She is aware of the report in today's *Globe and Mail* of a high incidence of inconvertible birth defects in West Toronto. Has her Department any data to substantiate the findings, and in view of the dangerously speculative nature of the conclusions will her Department conduct its own investigation into this very tragic phenomenon?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, a priori, when a study of a health nature concludes that there is a race basis for any of its findings, we are, if I may say, doubly careful. We have not received the data on that from the Ontario Ministry of Health. We requested it today. I will make a point of carefully studying the exact way the study was conducted, the size of the sampling and the exact geographic area, to see if the conclusions are valid or not.