

Oral Questions

copters but I will investigate the suggestion made by the hon. member as quickly as possible.

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FISHERIES**REQUEST FOR STATEMENT BY MINISTER ON FREEZE OF LICENCES**

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Fisheries. May I ask if, as a result of his meeting with some provincial fisheries ministers last week, the minister will be making a statement to relieve the anxiety of certain fishermen in their preparation for the forthcoming seasons with regard to the freeze on the transfer of licences and the general situation, especially with regard to fishermen who wish to withdraw from the fishing industry and transfer their gear and so on somewhere else?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of State (Fisheries)): Mr. Speaker, the ministers of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island supported the general thrust of the program, although they recognized the difficulties involved. As for the matter of the freeze on licences, when I made the announcement I indicated this would be a temporary freeze. Fisheries officials are receiving applications for transfer, they are putting dates on them and keeping them on a file of pending decisions which could be made in a couple of weeks or more. Meanwhile, the appeal boards are setting up their operations and I hope to meet with maritime members of parliament—my staff tell me it might be tomorrow—but I hope to meet with them soon.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**INQUIRY WHETHER QUEBEC CONSULTED ON PROBLEMS OF LOWER ST. LAWRENCE**

Mr. Albert Béchard (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

As the special agreement concerning the development of the Lower St. Lawrence, Gaspé and Magdalen Islands area will soon come to amend, more specifically on March 31, 1976, and as the problems have obviously not yet been solved, would the minister tell the House and particularly the people of that area, who are most anxious to find out what fate awaits them, whether the authorities concerned of the province of Quebec have been in touch with his department, by way of the related agreements to the general development agreement with regard to the completion of the work undertaken under that soon to end agreement, and, if not, would the minister welcome such a request and would he give it his vigorous support in cabinet?

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, indeed the officials of the provincial department and those of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion have met several times and explored jointly the possibility of either extending the

[Mr. MacEachen.]

agreement, or signing a related agreement within the general development agreement.

We trust that our hopes to that effect can materialize in the near future, and that we will be in a position to announce what a special agreement could contain with a view to continuing and completing, if possible, the development of that part in the province of Quebec.

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[English]

THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION**POSSIBILITY OF PATRIATION BY UNILATERAL ACTION OF CANADA**

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice on a political safari in British Columbia, I shall direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister. Before the Prime Minister left he stated that consideration was being given to unilateral action to the patriation—and I say patriation rather than repatriation because we have never had the constitution—of the constitution. I would ask him the simple question, as this is a most unusual suggestion and it has been regarded as an unconstitutional course ever since confederation, has the government had the Clerk of the Privy Council or anyone on behalf of the Privy Council ask the law officers of the Crown whether there could be patriation of the constitution by action other than through a statute in the Parliament of Westminster?

● (1450)

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether any such advice has been sought. I will make inquiries.

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COMBINES**BRYCE COMMISSION—POSSIBLE REMOVAL FROM COMMISSION OF PIERRE NADEAU BECAUSE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister. In December, a couple of months ago, a member of the Conservative party asked the Prime Minister whether he had decided on a conflict of interest or possible conflict of interest and possible removal from the Bryce Commission of Pierre Nadeau because of the fact that he is director of the Royal Bank which has had some intimate ties with Power Corporation. The Prime Minister said he would refer the matter to the chairman of the commission. Has a decision been made and, if so, what has been the recommendation of the chairman?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, the chairman has made no recommendation. I will see whether he intends to make one.

Mr. Nystrom: While checking into that, because it has been over two months since the question was asked by the