

[English]

FISHERIES

PLIGHT OF GILLNETTERS ON LOWER FRASER RIVER, B.C.

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The minister will remember that in early April, and then again in committee, I asked him what possible means could be taken to assist the gillnetters in the lower Fraser River. Also the minister will remember that there was a proposal put to the department for a net buy-back program and also a sum of money per fisherman to take them out of the industry, given the fact that it is very, very difficult for them to fish at all because of the need to protect chinook stocks. The minister knows that there will be a meeting this Sunday in New Westminster of the gillnetters. I ask him again whether he has had an opportunity to discuss this further with his officials and whether he is prepared to give any kind of an answer to these gillnetters?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, as I indicated to the hon. member in committee, the fuel proposal did not appear to be one which could be administered with efficiency and with realism. The question of nets is still being discussed. I understand that my officials are also trying to find, as they did last year, some additional fishing space in the fishing plan for the coming season, but I have no easy solution to offer the hon. member.

REQUEST THAT DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS ATTEND MEETING

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, the minister knows that at least to some degree, and perhaps to a greater degree in some cases, these gillnetters in the Fraser River need income from fishing. The minister realizes that, in taking them out as a conservation measure, they are put in a very difficult and unequal position. I am not saying unfair; I am saying "unequal". Would the minister undertake at this time to ensure that he has officials of his department at the meeting on Sunday in New Westminster to hear the comments of the gillnetters, to respond to those comments, and perhaps to come up with some solution which is equitable with respect to the livelihood that these particular fishermen are having to give up?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I fully recognize the difficulties which are imposed upon the groups of fishermen who, for conservation reasons, are restricted in their activities. It is difficult for us always to ensure that for each dislocation there will be some form of compensation. We try to average over a number of years and to find a way to keep the incomes of fishermen within reasonable levels. As the hon. member knows, if a group of fishermen has an income loss which is unusual, and if the prices support board concludes that the income has been reduced very substantially, then the board, which is an

Oral Questions

independent body with fishermen representatives, makes recommendations to the minister.

As to the question of the meeting on Sunday, if it is a meeting to which my officials are invited obviously they will, as usual, be present. However, if it is a meeting to demonstrate, I hope the hon. member will understand that no useful purpose will be served.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

FILLING OF VACANCIES

Mr. Bill Wright (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. He will have a vague recollection that there are three vacancies in the House of Commons. Would he not consider that the residents of these three constituencies should have representatives in the House of Commons and, if not, why not?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Madam Speaker, I do consider that they should, and indeed Parliament made this quite clear in an amendment to the law some years ago when it indicated that the government would have to declare the date for a by-election within six months of the vacancy being recognized.

Mr. Wright: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has not given us any good reason why these by-elections should not take place.

POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Bill Wright (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister again: is he not a political coward for not holding these by-elections?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Well, Madam Speaker, if I am a coward, obviously every member of the House is a coward because we agreed in the House to give any government six months to—

Mr. Nielsen: How about Spadina?

Mr. Wright: Call it right now!

Mr. Trudeau: He wants me to "call it right now". I will not do it right now, Madam Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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● (1500)

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUEST THAT BENEFIT PERIOD BE EXTENDED

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The minister responsible for unemployment insurance is aware that 500,000 unemployed Canadians stand to lose their