

Oral Questions

The strike of these workers leaves Canada's fishing stocks wide open to foreign fishermen, grinds search and rescue to a halt, and jeopardizes response to environmental disasters such as the near spill off the coast of Alaska just this morning.

Will the minister finally admit that these negotiations have been bungled, that it is time to put a fair offer on the table to get these people back to work and get things moving in Canadian waters?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned quite a few times in the House on this particular matter, the government is prepared to go back to the table at any time.

We would welcome a positive sign from the union to indicate that it is willing to sit down and talk seriously about reaching a mutually agreeable negotiated settlement.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, it is the minister who has said these people are necessary to the safety and security of the Canadian public. It is up to him not to sit back and wait for the union but to put a decent offer on the table to get these people back to the bargaining table.

Has the minister in fact told his negotiators that \$21,000 is not decent compensation for the risks these people take, that their lives are worth the same whether they work on the east coast, the west coast, the north coast or the Great Lakes? Has he instructed his negotiators to put a decent and equitable offer on the table?

Mr. de Cotret: Mr. Speaker, we have already put a decent and acceptable offer on the table in keeping with the offer we made to the rest of the public service.

We recognize the question of pay equity between the east and the west, and we put that on the table. I wish the hon. member opposite would research her questions before asking them. That is on the table.

Mrs. Catterall: But 1991 is not soon enough.

Mr. de Cotret: That is on the table. It is on the table for the end of the contract. That was flatly rejected and no counter offer was forthcoming from the union.

If the union would like to come back with a counter offer, we are more than prepared to look at it.

• (1450)

I am saying that we, as a responsible government concerned with the welfare of our employees and the safety and security of Canadians, are willing to go back to the table on a moment's notice as soon as the union tells us it has something to counter the offer that is already there.

Mrs. Catterall: You should take the initiative. It is your responsibility.

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JUSTICE

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

Under Section 5 of the RCMP Act it is not the commissioner who is in charge of the RCMP; it is the Solicitor General who directs the commissioner.

Will the Solicitor General exercise his responsibilities in respect of the Peter White letter and say that in the interests of the public and the administration of justice he will not wait for the commissioner to come back, that he will today produce the Peter White letter in this House?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, that question was answered earlier by the Deputy Prime Minister. I am really astonished, and I find it hard to understand the NDP's position on this matter. We have made it abundantly clear that we believe, and I think we are supported in this by the former Solicitor General, the hon. member for York Centre, that the integrity and independence of the RCMP must be preserved. Is the hon. member suggesting that I should intervene and give instructions to RCMP officers in a case that is now before the courts, Mr. Speaker? If that is what is being suggested, all I can say is that I would never do such a thing, because I respect the integrity of the RCMP and because we must let the RCMP do its job, Mr. Speaker, especially when an investigation is being challenged before the courts.

[*English*]

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Speaker, let me ask about another exercise of the minister's responsibility in the Grisé