

Oral Questions

REQUEST THAT SURVEY RESULTS BE PUBLISHED

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question refers to that questionnaire the minister sent out over his signature to 140,000 cattle producers in Canada, and that includes 53,000 dairy producers. Will the minister's response, when it comes out, be made public? Will the totals be given for each sector within the cattle industry? For example, will he give the figures for the dairy industry, and the total response to that questionnaire?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the hon. member asks about what kind of plan I was proposing. I had the authority of the government to propose, and we did propose to producers in 1977, a 100 per cent harmonization not only for beef products but also for pork products and all other agricultural products. The cattlemen's association turned that down at that time saying that it was too rich, that it would cause overproduction and so forth. The hon. member should not say I have never offered them anything. I offered that to them on behalf of the Government of Canada, and they turned it down. Now they are asking me to come up with a plan. We had a plan for them over four years ago, but they did not accept it. That was one of the best plans ever proposed by any country in the world.

We are trying to make sure we do the right thing and, naturally, the facts we obtain from that questionnaire will be made public just as soon as they can be tabulated. The dairy industry provides about 25 per cent of the beef for the consumers of Canada and provides some of our meat exports to the United States of America, so that industry ought to be consulted too, and it is being consulted. The names of dairy producers are being kept separate in the computers because those names were taken from the dairy records we keep. It may not be a perfect mailing list, but it is as good as we can make it.

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FISHERIES

REPORTED OFFER OF OFFSHORE QUOTAS—EAST COAST COMPANIES

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the seatmate of the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Canadians have long believed that the fishing industry is a common property of all Canadians, but the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is drastically changing that concept of the fishing industry, particularly at the moment on the east coast. There are meetings currently going on which will turn the common property of that resource offshore over to a consortium of four companies—Nickerson's, National Sea, the Lake Group and Fishery Products—in terms of a transfer of a property right which they will be able to trade, barter, borrow or sell.

● (1440)

I would like to ask the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans if he can confirm that an offer has been made to those companies to take company quotas. If that is the case, will the minister advise how he is going to ensure jobs in the offshore fisheries if those companies have that right and develop a monopoly of offshore fisheries to the exclusion of any other companies?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's question underlines the difficulty of consultation where proposals are made, debated, and then judgments reached. This suggestion was put forward and discussed quite seriously by all segments of the industry. It was put forward at a meeting where fishermen, companies big and small, provincial governments and, of course, the federal government, were represented. I have not had a report on the reaction to this suggestion. When and if I receive that report, I will obviously have to assume my responsibility. I want to make it clear to the hon. member that, if this suggestion is adopted, it will be on a trial basis. No one intends to give away the resources of the people of Canada.

MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Madam Speaker, in view of conditions in the east coast offshore industry and the Atlantic groundfish plan whereby the companies obtain their quota in a very short period of time, overstocking their warehouses and running into financial difficulties because of the interest rate policy of the government, does the minister feel he and his department are more competent than those companies which overfished last year at managing that offshore fishery?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, if the hon. member looks at the figures of the fishery for January and February, he will see that what happened was a race for the fish and a lack of discipline. If we were able on a trial basis to allocate a fair share to the four major companies which run the offshore trawlers without affecting the inshore fishermen, the responsibility would be on their shoulders to ensure the best utilization of the resource for the markets that are available, rather than this mad race to catch fish because of the belief that, if they do not catch the fish today, somebody else will.

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MARINE TRANSPORT

CUT IN FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN NEWFOUNDLAND AND NOVA SCOTIA

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. On November 16 the minister ordered CN Marine to reduce by one the two ferry service operations they currently have as a summer operation between eastern Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. That decision was taken at a time when the govern-