

Oral Questions

be very pleased to provide the hon. gentleman with the comments that I made at that particular time.

In terms of the case which he has identified, I am very sensitive to that case as well, as I have indicated in the correspondence.

Mr. Wilson: One per cent.

Mr. Blais: However, under the circumstances related to that specific case, there was very little that I could do to change the decision that I actually made.

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FISHERIES

JAPANESE BAN ON GREAT LAKES FISH IMPORTS

Mr. Robert Daudlin (Essex-Kent): Madam Speaker, through you I would ask a question of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The Minister will know that through the unfortunate linkage in the Japanese press of erroneous information on dioxin in the Great Lakes and the freshwater smelt fishery, there have been bans placed in Japan on that particular fish. That ban has, in fact, resulted in substantial lay-offs in the Port of Wheatley and other ports on Lake Erie. Would the Minister indicate to the House what steps are being taken by himself and the Government to overcome this erroneous information, to assure the Japanese that there is not the linkage which has been made by the press in that country and that, in fact, normal trade relations in this commodity can be restored?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, may I first say that we do appreciate the importance of the Japanese market to the Canadian fishery. At the moment, it represents the third market for Canada. Second, there were articles in the United States about contamination by dioxin in the Saguenay Bay in Michigan, that were reported in the Japanese press. Third, the Hon. Member is right that there was some confusion in Japan that there could be linkage with the smelt from that area exported from Canada.

● (1440)

I would like to give the firmest assurances that we have tested the smelt exported to Japan from Canada and not a trace of dioxin has been found. I have sent a telex to all interested parties in Japan through our Embassy to tell them the actual fact that, if there is any dioxin in the United States, I can give the most positive and firm assurances that there is absolutely no dioxin in our own smelts that are exported from our own freshwater fishery to Japan.

VIA RAIL

TRANSCONTINENTAL PASSENGER SERVICE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Transport another question that "smelt" and still does. It takes 23 more hours to travel by rail from Montreal to Vancouver now than it did in 1966. Would the Minister advise the House about the plan to discontinue the Transcontinental passenger train to and from Montreal and transfer the original destination and departure point of the Transcontinental to Toronto, which would mean that people from Montreal would have to change trains and those east of Montreal would no longer be able to board the Transcontinental in Montreal?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, VIA is presently studying many ideas that are on the table. This particular one has not been accepted by the Government. In due course I will inform my hon. friend if it ever is accepted. My hon. friend should not forget the fact that the subsidy to VIA has risen to \$750 million a year. I think it is normal for VIA to try to do everything to save money while providing adequate service.

Mr. Benjamin: The money that the Minister puts up, he gives to the CPR and CNR for exorbitant charges to handle the VIA passenger trains.

DINING AND SLEEPING CAR SERVICE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, since the Minister cut the National Capital, the cities of Melville, Jasper, and Edmonton out of the Transcontinental service in 1981, would he confirm that it is the intention of the Government to fractionalize Transcontinental service so that it is intercity, in order not to have to order new Transcontinental passenger equipment and to discontinue dining and sleeping car accommodation on the Transcontinental trains?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I recall vividly that at the time of the 20 per cent cut I indicated that the Transcontinental was maintained. The second Transcontinental going north was divided into a number of intercity service. That is still the situation now.

My hon. friend is possibly referring to the fact that VIA is looking at other arrangements that might resurrect the route between Winnipeg and Saskatoon. But that is one of the many plans that are being looked at now.

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SUPPLY AND SERVICES

FRIGATE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT—EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. He will no doubt recall that on April 29, as reported at page