

Oral Questions

(Fisheries). In view of the fact that the incomes of the fishermen are deteriorating as a result of the depletion of our fish stocks, can the minister indicate to the House what is happening with the proposed income support program that was supposed to be implemented in July, 1975?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of State (Fisheries)): Mr. Speaker, on the latter part of the question, I do not think I ever undertook to implement a program by July, 1975. We are working on this program hand in hand with one for stabilization of prices to fishermen. We hoped to bring them before the House in the coming months.

Mr. Marshall: A supplementary question. In view of the fact that there might be continuing delays, I wonder if the minister would indicate if he has had discussion with his colleagues on modifications of the unemployment insurance provisions relating to fishermen in order to overcome many of the inequities that are hindering collection of payments?

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): Mr. Speaker, we had accepted that UIC for fishermen would continue until a program was brought in to replace it.

Mr. Alexander: We heard that four years ago.

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): I was not here four years ago. At the present time, I would hope we can move more quickly than on amendments to the UIC.

POISONING OF FISH IN CAPILANO HATCHERY—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION

Mr. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a question for the Minister of State for Fisheries. Can he advise if the RCMP have been called in to investigate the chlorine poisoning of 1½ million fish in the Capilano hatchery?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of State (Fisheries)): Mr. Speaker, my information is that pathology tests done in the last 48 hours have not revealed in a precise manner the reason for this tragic accident or sabotage—we do not know which is involved yet. The police have been asked to co-operate with us.

Mr. Huntington: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, and I should like to advise the minister that the cause of death of the fish is known and that it is chlorine. I should like to ask if it is possible for the minister to advise how chlorine could get into the water system of the Capilano hatchery as it is a carefully controlled component of hatchery environment?

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that traces of chlorine have been found, but I have no report yet from the scientists that this is the final and firm cause of the death of fish. On the question of how this might have been introduced into the system, that is precisely what we are trying to find out now. I find it rather difficult to believe it could have been accidental but we are checking every point.

[Mr. Marshall.]

POST OFFICE

REASON FOR MINISTER'S ULTIMATUM ON WAGES WHILE OTHER NEGOTIABLE ITEMS NOT SETTLED

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Postmaster General. Considering the fact that while negotiations were going on between Treasury Board and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, over 100 clauses had been initialled and that the union had agreed not to strike while negotiations were continuing, why did the minister lay a wage ultimatum on the table which forced a strike when so many other negotiable issues remained unsettled, bearing in mind that without the leverage of the wage packet they could not negotiate on the non-monetary issues?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I think that is a fair and honest question. There were many clauses and articles initialled on Friday and Saturday. They let it be well understood that there would be no strike while negotiations were going on. Unfortunately, while negotiations were taking place on Monday night, orders had already gone out to strike at midnight, which is hardly evidence that they acted in good faith. I have the evidence any time the hon. member would like to see it.

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON NEGOTIATING TOTAL PACKAGE OF BENEFITS

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): I think all members of the House would like to see if that evidence is valid or not, Mr. Speaker. I should like to put a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister in the absence of the President of the Treasury Board. Is the government prepared to follow standard collective bargaining procedures and negotiate a total package of benefits with the postal unions rather than trying to force the unions leadership to go to the general membership with exclusively a wage proposal?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, because this is a very delicate matter and although I hesitate to say I will take it as notice, it is one of the questions I think I should take as notice so that I will not make any misstatement that might interfere in any way with the bargaining.

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AGRICULTURE

SUGGESTED ADOPTION OF MEASURES TO PROTECT CANADIANS AGAINST INCREASES IN FOOD PRICES

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture.

Since grain prices are not included in the measures announced on October 13, and that as a consequence, they are exposed to changes on the free market of the Winnipeg and Chicago exchanges, has the minister considered taking the necessary steps to protect Canadian consumers from a possible rise in food prices?