

Oral Questions

consult with the business community, is he prepared to agree today to conduct public hearings across Canada so that the business people can have ready access to the reports and have ready access to some of the recommendations he will make? Will he hold public hearings across the country to react to this three-year study?

Mr. Nielsen: That is a great idea.

[Translation]

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, it is always easier to criticize how something is done than what is done, and I feel that since both the summary and the twelve actual studies prepared by various academics were published yesterday, Canadian businessmen and women, who are more resourceful than the hon. member opposite, will be able to read the studies for themselves and formulate comments without resorting to a formal public forum of consultation.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

SALMON FISHING ON THE RESTIGOUCHE RIVER—INQUIRY
WHETHER AGREEMENT REACHED WITH MICMAC BAND

Mrs. Eva Côté (Rimouski-Témiscouata): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The minister will recall that, last year, there was a very distressing situation in connection with salmon fishing on the Restigouche River. I am aware that the federal minister has been negotiating for some time with the native people in that area. Could the minister inform us whether an agreement has been reached, and if so, what kind of agreement or settlement was arranged?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Yes, Madam Speaker, negotiations have been going on for two days, and there are many members on both sides of the House who will be very, very happy to hear the news that a settlement has been reached between the chief and ourselves and the Government of Quebec, so this year there will not be the unhappy incidents at Restigouche there were last year over the question of fishing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REPORTED DISTRIBUTION OF MEDALLIONS

Mr. Lorne Greenaway (Cariboo-Chilcotin): Madam Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Is it the plan of the minister to give every chief in Canada a bronze medallion? If so, why, and how much is this going to cost?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, a week or so ago my predecessor gave me notification of a memo, which obviously he has sent to some of his colleagues in the Conservative caucus, about suggestions of this kind. May I say I think it was probably done in all innocence but, in short, the answer is no.

Mr. Greenaway: Madam Speaker, just to correct the record, I was not given this memo by the previous minister. I was given this memo by an Indian chief at hearings out in Vancouver, and this memo was from the department itself outlining the whole program. In addition to that I have the minister's briefing notes wherein he agreed a year ago that this was a good program, and the minister said, "We are going to go right ahead with it."

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): You speak with forked tongue.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lorne Greenaway (Cariboo-Chilcotin): Madam Speaker, will the minister once again tell us whether this will be done or will not be done?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, my friend, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton, used to be in the ministry, and he should be aware that ministers do not send briefing notes to their officials. It is usually the other way around.

He should also be aware that ministers do not always accept the advice given in their briefing notes.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Perhaps you should.

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AGRICULTURE

PROGRAMS TO ASSIST ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. The minister will know that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion has been doing less and less to help agriculture in the Atlantic region. I want to ask the minister once again what progress, if any, is being made in the consideration of removing the PFRA from that department, taking it into his portfolio and expanding it into a national program which would be for the benefit of agriculture right across the country and help strengthen that sector and the economy in Atlantic Canada.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I differ with what the hon. member said about what the federal government is doing for Atlantic Canada. I am sure he is aware of the grant which has been given to Scotia Gold in his area, which experienced a disaster last year. The DREE people under the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion