

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE**

## NEW BRUNSWICK SEED POTATO STOCK

**Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Quebec minister of agriculture has been blaming, in my opinion in a most irresponsible way, New Brunswick produced seed potato stock for the current regrettable situation in the province of Quebec. Can the minister assure us that Mr. Garon's affirmations are not true and that they are irresponsible and damaging to the whole potato industry in Canada, at a time when we are aggressively promoting offshore markets, and are cruelly unjust to New Brunswick producers who have in place the best available disease control program in North America? Did the minister ask Mr. Garon yesterday to put a stop to his false statements and wild accusations?

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, Mr. Garon and his officials did meet yesterday with some of my officials and myself. We discussed the issue at length. The evidence that has been presented to me by my officials shows that what the hon. member says to me is correct. The inspection service that we have, the procedure that we follow, is one of the best in the world. We are confident that the seed potatoes produced in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are as safe as anyone can find in the world. We asked Mr. Garon to take this into consideration in what he is saying in the statements he is making which are damaging the image of these potatoes which are as safe as any that can be bought. They are as disease free as any that can be bought anywhere in the world.

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**FORESTRY**

## DISCUSSIONS ON LAY-OFFS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA INDUSTRY

**Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Talks have been taking place for some time now between the minister's officials and the British Columbia government regarding special forestry-related employment programs for the 14,000 unemployed woodworkers in British Columbia. Over 85 per cent of the woodworkers in my riding alone are unemployed as of this week. To date these meetings have involved federal and provincial officials, the Council of Forest Industries, the industry trade associations and Forest Industrial Relations, but no representatives from either the IWA, the silvacultural contractors or the reforestation workers' associations. The people who do the work have not been allowed to take part.

● (1440)

Why has the federal government or the British Columbia government not consulted the very people who know most about the people to be employed and the complexities of the job to be done, and how does the minister square this very one-

sided and self-defeating approach with his and his government's oft-repeated policy of consultation?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, I think this question would be more appropriate directed to the minister of labour in the British Columbia government. I undertook to meet directly with the minister of labour and offered a federal response under Section 38 by saying that we would be prepared to use our funds to support major job-creation efforts in the forestry industry. From that point on it really is the responsibility of the provincial government to follow through. We have had meetings with the provincial government, and I am anxiously awaiting its response.

I can say to the hon. member that, in addition, we have had very positive responses from other provinces, and I will be in a position to make announcements in the next few days. However, as far as meeting with the labour unions is concerned, I think it would be a proper thing to do, and I would be pleased to pass the hon. member's comments on to the minister of labour in the British Columbia government, who would have to initiate those discussions.

## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION

**Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West):** Madam Speaker, I certainly hope it is the job of any federal minister to ensure that we get the biggest bang for our bucks when it comes to the jobs we want to create in that very hard hit industry. I have just returned from meetings with the silvacultural contractors, the tree planters and the IWA. Many of the contractors and tree planters are non-union. If there are not the consultations I have suggested, the program might simply employ some workers and cause equal unemployment amongst others. However, if the program were intelligently applied it would do a better job and employ twice the number of people for exactly the same money.

Will the minister agree to approach the British Columbia government, as he has suggested, very soon, and how soon does he believe we can expect some action on this potentially very important program for British Columbia?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, just by way of a very short reply I should also tell the hon. member that I personally met with members of the IWA union when I visited Vancouver Island. I talked to them about this very project and received their endorsement. I also asked my officials to meet with them so that we could establish some short-term employment response projects on Vancouver Island and so that we could have a close contact with them. However, with the hon. member's encouragement and support and, I am sure, the encouragement and support of his entire caucus—at least I hope his entire caucus because they have not been entirely enthusiastic up to this point in time—we will go ahead and pass his message on to the British Columbia government and hopefully have an agreement in place in a very short period.