

Oral Questions

● (1440)

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the minister was speaking doubletalk intentionally, but rather from ignorance.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: I should like to ask either the Prime Minister or the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs what is the view of the government of Canada in respect of this matter? Should the full conference, if it is held, concern itself with the prices of primary products other than petroleum?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I may have missed the first part of the first question, but my impression is that there is no more information to give than that advanced by the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs when asked whether this preliminary conference should be discussing other things than it is in fact discussing. I would tell the hon. member that we attempted to be part of that preliminary conference, and had we been part of it we perhaps would have expressed our views there, and might have had to formulate an answer to the question the hon. member is asking. We were not successful in being invited there, and therefore were not in a position to express views on that.

POSSIBILITY OF CANADA CALLING CONFERENCE OF OIL
PRODUCING AND CONSUMING COUNTRIES

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, because the preparatory world conference on energy has collapsed, with very grave implications for the world in respect of the price of energy, would the Prime Minister reconsider Canada taking the lead in organizing a global conference of oil producing and consuming countries to head off a threatened price increase? I put this question in the context of Canada being both an importer and exporter of oil and because of our trusted position internationally.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, we had hoped that we would have been invited to the preparatory conference, and I think it would have been helpful if we had. I want to assure the hon. gentleman that the effort to convene a conference has not yet been abandoned and discussions are going on among the countries concerned.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

SLUG OF DEAD WATER IN RED RIVER—POSSIBLE UNITED
STATES RESPONSIBILITY TO INFORM CANADA OF ORIGIN—
AMOUNT OF DAMAGE TO FISH

Mr. Dean Whiteway (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Prime Minister is now in a position to inform the House regarding the slug of dead water moving down the Red River? Can he tell the House whether the pollution did in fact occur on the United States side of the border and if there was an obligation on the part of the

[Mr. Sharp.]

United States, either under the Boundary Waters Treaty or the Fisheries Act, to inform the Canadian government on March 27 when this was first monitored in the United States?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not have the answer to that question which was asked on Monday. I am informed that the parliamentary secretary has been able to follow it through.

Mr. Len Marchand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, this particular slug of water has passed down the Red River and has dissipated into Lake Winnipeg, as I understand it. Canada has been following this problem since it began. As a matter of fact it was our department which discovered the problem first at Emerson. The whole thing has been referred to the IJC, but the cause or the source of the problem has not yet been totally identified. We have some suspicions but we really cannot identify the source until we hear further from the IJC.

Mr. Whiteway: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that on March 27 this same slug of water was monitored first in the United States sector, I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary would answer the question I put to the Prime Minister? Was there any obligation on the part of the United States government to inform Canadian sources once it did monitor this, and is the Canadian government in fact now in a position to tell us what damage in terms of fish loss occurred, and does the government intend to take legal action in respect of compensation for that loss of fish?

Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): Mr. Speaker, I will have to check on the first part of the question. Having regard to the second part, we do know there has been some fish damage, but we do not have a complete assessment of the extent of the damage.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

CHANGE IN MATERNITY BENEFITS—DATE OF
IMPLEMENTATION

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration refers to a recent statement by his colleague, the Minister of the Environment, in which she said that the government has made the Unemployment Insurance Act more flexible where maternity benefits are concerned in that women will now be able to take maternity leave of 15 weeks in all in whatever way they choose, all before or all after the birth of the child. Will the minister inform the House when this legislation came into effect and when local UIC offices will be informed of the change which his colleague says will make these benefits applicable for 15 weeks either before or after the birth?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to examine my colleague's statement.

An hon. Member: It was premature.