

Oral Questions

body of labour, management and government, could the minister give us any advice as to what steps were taken to date in order to bring about the establishment of such an important and much needed body?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have held informal meetings with some principals involved in the labour and business communities but, more important, some of them dealt with the over-all inflationary situation. The Prime Minister has also taken part in such meetings. We hope that at meetings of this kind some suggestions will be made to deal with the problem.

Mr. Alexander: In view of the importance of the adoption of the principle of public interest, which he discounted yesterday, I should like to ask the minister whether he would give further particulars regarding the terms of reference that he discussed with the parties involved and give us some indication as to their reaction or any other particulars.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I think that the hon. member might agree that it is not particularly helpful, when you are discussing these matters, to come up with specific proposals before you have even had a chance to meet with the parties and obtain their views regarding how they wish to proceed. We have been criticized before, not only by some of the interested parties, but by the opposition, for totally undermining any meaningful consultations by coming to conclusions prior to consultations with the parties.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE**SUCCESS OF DEPARTMENT IN OPERATING NEW BUDGETING SCHEME—ALLEGED ORDERS TO CUT OPERATIONAL COSTS**

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): My question is for the Minister of National Defence. On October 10 last year he announced a new budgeting scheme for the armed forces which would "allow for substantial increases in capital expenditures for badly needed new equipment". Could the minister advise the House as to the success of his announced program?

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will realize that in the intervening period there have been vast increases in costs. Our main expenditures in national defence are in the categories of personnel, maintenance and operations, and new equipment. We have found it necessary to reduce the expenditures, or try to, in all three of these categories in order to stay within the budget.

Mr. McKinnon: Could the minister inform the House whether his budget is now in such disarray that he has ordered commanders in the field to cut their operational and maintenance budgets by 30 per cent or, alternatively, does he contemplate a further reduction in the strength of the forces?

[Mr. Alexander.]

Mr. Richardson: I have indicated that we have found it necessary to reduce expenditures in all categories. We are by no means in disarray. We are operating in an orderly way under difficult high cost conditions.

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AGRICULTURE**ALLEGATION EGGS SHIPPED FROM NEWFOUNDLAND TO BRITISH COLUMBIA WERE DESTROYED WHEN USABLE—GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR PROCESSING**

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Agriculture please tell the House and the people of British Columbia who are currently paying not 84 cents but 94 cents a dozen for eggs, whether or not many of the supposedly rotten eggs shipped all the way from Newfoundland to British Columbia for final destruction were not actually rotten but rather many were in a whole and usable form and declared rotten or cracked in order to justify their destruction. Furthermore, in view of the fact that major plants processing raw eggs to powdered eggs were and continue to operate at less than 50 per cent capacity, is the minister prepared to purchase or subsidize the processing of current or future surpluses to ensure that this despicable waste does not continue to occur?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member is not aware of all the details regarding the shipment of those eggs. Some of the things he said would not have been said by him if he had been aware. The eggs shipped from Newfoundland were commercial eggs. They were transferred from 40 foot cars to 50 foot cars without government inspection. Then they were shipped for processing because I was told there were no eggs available for processing at the plants in western Canada. Why in the world did it take three weeks to ship eggs to British Columbia? In spite of this, some people are suggesting we should have shipped them to Austria. If it takes that long to reach western Canada, I do not know how in the world we could have shipped them overseas. I am sure the hon. member would not blame CEMA which does not set the price of eggs in British Columbia. It is the British Columbia egg marketing board which sets the price of their own eggs, as do the other provinces. CEMA has the obligation of taking surplus eggs from the provincial marketing boards. If the hon. member thinks that they are happy about the waste or that anyone else is happy about it, he is wrong. He should check the history of egg production and see how eggs were destroyed by farmers feeding them to their livestock. He should go back to 1971 and see what people did with eggs then.

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GRAIN**REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE GRAIN IS MOVING FROM THE LAKEHEAD—AMOUNT OF DEMURRAGE CHARGES**

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): I should like to direct my question either to the Minister of Labour or the Minister of Transport. A report in the October 5 issue