

Concern is growing on the west coast that some of the recommendations of Dr. Pearse may work a very serious hardship on the ordinary people in the fishing industry. I should like to know exactly what the minister means when he refers to consultation.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, surely the hon. member would not want the consultations to take place only in Ottawa. They will take place mainly in the province that is affected, which is British Columbia. That is what has already taken place. My officials have met with representatives of different sectors of the industry, and I will be meeting with representatives of the advisory council which was created by my predecessor. I hope there will be full discussion in these forums. I intend to be in the Prince Rupert area in the middle of December, and again I will meet with groups there.

I encourage full discussion of the report. My worry is that a lot of people are drawing conclusions from the opposition of one group to one recommendation in what is a very broad report. I would hope that everybody would keep an open mind and that we could arrive at conclusions on consensus if possible.

TIMETABLE FOR DISCUSSIONS

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): I would remind the minister that a few days ago I asked about Dr. Pearse's report and I point out we all respect Dr. Pearse. I wanted to know what chance there would be for public discussion, and what chance there would be for discussion in front of the committee. The minister indicated that there would be both.

The minister also said that, in view of certain time requirements for the coming season, the government might have to move quickly on some of the recommendations. In general terms I think that is what the minister said.

What we want to know, Madam Speaker, is under what sort of time deadline are we operating. The concern has been brought to us by one group, the minister says. But that group represents an awful lot of individuals, a lot of people and families, and their concerns are very important to them. Under what time limit are we operating?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I would have to check the exact words but, as hon. members know, if some decisions are not made before the opening of the season next spring, then obviously there will be a one-year delay before making any changes. The industry advised that, if possible, we should have recommendations from Dr. Pearse early enough to look at them and see if some might be implemented before the 1982 season. That is what I hope to achieve.

Oral Questions

CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION

ABANDONMENT OF BRANCH LINE FROM ROSEDALE TO EAST COULEE, ALTA.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. On October 23, 1981, the western wing of the Canadian Transport Commission ordered that the CNR and CPR, and I quote, "shall abandon the branch line from Rosedale to East Coulee" (8.8 miles)." Under what authority was this order made?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the Canadian Transport Commission has that authority. After analysing a branch line it can either decide to put an end to it or it can decide to recommend a continuation. The decision is reviewable after five years. The Canadian Transport Commission can also recommend to me that a branch line should be incorporated in the basic network system up to the year 2000 and also that it be included in the branch line rehabilitation program. These are decisions for the minister to make, but the Canadian Transport Commission can make a recommendation.

LEGALITY OF ABANDONMENT ORDER

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Madam Speaker, since there are millions of tons of coal in the East Coulee area, and Allied Chemicals Canada has a plant on the route, the decision by the CTC is difficult to understand. I would point out to the minister that in 1929 an act was passed by the Parliament of Canada under which Parliament confirmed an agreement between the CPR and the CNR, dated June, 1929, to operate this line "in perpetuity". This statute has never been repealed; it is still on the law books.

● (1450)

Has the CTC the authority to repeal statutes or to make orders contrary to the laws of Canada? I am sure the minister will answer no. Therefore, will the minister review this situation and have the said order rescinded, because it is completely contrary to the statute on the law books of Canada?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am quite sure that the Canadian Transport Commission was aware of that legal document. My honourable friend suggests that I look into the matter further. I will. I cannot, however, commit myself to reversing a decision of the CTC. I am quite sure the CTC took the legal document he referred to into account.

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PUBLIC WORKS

CONTRACT FOR USE OF CENTENNIAL TOWERS OFFICE BUILDING IN OTTAWA

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works. The life