

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I can report to the Hon. Member that the question of the pay-out on barley payments is now being considered by the Minister of State responsible for the Wheat Board. I expect he will be making a recommendation to Cabinet momentarily.

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FISHERIES

GEORGETOWN PLANT IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND—MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, if I might have his attention. Yesterday, in the House, the Minister said that the federal Government was still looking into the possibilities concerning the reopening of the Seafoods Plant at Georgetown, Prince Edward Island. How does the Minister reconcile that uncertain statement with firm commitments given by his colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, all last summer, to the workers at Georgetown, that the reopening of the plant was imminent? Who was speaking for the Government of Canada on this important issue, the Minister of Fisheries or the Minister of Veterans Affairs?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): I can tell the Hon. Member, if he is trying to see any contradiction, that there is none. I have had several meetings with the regional Minister for P.E.I., precisely on the question involving Georgetown, and we are working on it very hard. On the other hand, as the Hon. Member may remember, I have said that, before focusing on one plant in a particular Province, what we must do is to look toward establishing healthy corporations, with proper financing, and then we can focus on the different plants.

Now that we have, I hope, managed to come to a solution by the merger of Nickerson and National Sea, obviously, concerning the question of Georgetown, I see some avenue there. I will be meeting next Tuesday with the Minister of Fisheries of P.E.I. jointly with the regional Minister, and this topic will be among the questions we will be discussing.

DATE OF PLANT REOPENING

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans identify himself with the firm commitment given by his colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, to the workers of Georgetown that the opening of the plant will be prior to next spring? Yes or no? Will he give that commitment?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): I can say to my hon. friend that my resolve is as great as that of the regional Minister that every possibility be studied. If a solution can be found I am sure that nobody will be happier than the regional Minister himself.

Oral Questions

NATIONAL DEFENCE

REQUEST FOR RESTORATION OF NAVAL UNIFORMS

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I have a question to ask the Minister of National Defence. When Vice-Admiral Fulton retired as Chief of Maritime Command in July of 1983, he made a very serious plea to return the blue uniform to Canada's Navy. All concerned know that this would be a tremendous boost to morale in that branch of the Canadian Armed Forces. Therefore, will the Minister meet this plea from one of Canada's dedicated naval personnel, and will he immediately implement a plan or program to restore the navy blue uniform to Canada's Navy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, in view of Admiral Fulton's representations, and in view of a number of representations that have been made by Hon. Members, that is one of the areas to which I paid particular attention very early on, after being appointed. I have considered it very seriously, with the aspects identified by the Hon. Member, and have come to the judgment, having considered all the various arguments, that there is no advantage at this time—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais:—in returning to the old style uniforms or to the old colours. I might point out that over 68 per cent of those who are presently in the Force came into the Force at the time the uniform was of a green colour, such as it is, and are satisfied with the state of affairs. There is no intention of changing that state of affairs.

Mr. Crosby: I am very disappointed, as I am sure thousands of other Canadians will be, with the Minister's attitude.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER CONSULT ON ISSUE

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Will the Minister at least avoid taking a firm opinion on this matter? Will he consult many people across Canada, in and out of the Canadian Armed Forces, before he makes a final decision? I know that his predecessor was of that mind, but surely there is always hope for some change in his attitude. Therefore, I ask the Minister, will he at least consult—

Mr. Trudeau: Always backwards, never forward.

Mr. Crosby:—with people in the Armed Forces and other interested Canadians before he makes a final decision on this very important issue? And do not make light of it.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, I am not making light of it. As I indicated to the hon. gentleman, that was one of the first things that I considered. One of the factors I took under consideration at the time was that Canada has an armed force that has superior morale because we are able to provide it with the highest pay of any