

part of farmers to repay cash advances which were issued on the strength of a pledge that the grain was available to pay for those advances, and who then did not subsequently deliver grain, I did discuss this matter with the Canadian Wheat Board some time ago and was assured that most of the cases involving defaults had existed for a period of years and not just in very recent times. So in the circumstances it seemed quite appropriate for collection action to be continued.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. If the minister will not act for equitable and humanitarian reasons, will he take steps in light of the western economic conference to see that this deliberate badgering and harassment of farmers who cannot pay their bills for reasons beyond their control is stopped.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows that a question in those terms is not in order.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

ACTION OF COMMISSION IN SEIZING BANK ACCOUNTS TO COLLECT OVERPAYMENTS—DATE ON WHICH MINISTER AWARE OF PRACTICES

Mr. Terry O'Connor (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the minister's denial on Monday of any knowledge of the Unemployment Insurance Commission's practice of seizing bank accounts to collect overpayments, and in view of the fact that I wrote the minister on February 27 about such a case involving \$490, which letter he acknowledged and stated that such practice is necessary, does the minister now admit that he knew and condoned this deplorable practice?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's question certainly is not in order. The hon. member might like to ask another question but certainly the question asked by the hon. member is not in order.

Mr. O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, was the minister not aware on February 27 of this year of the practice which he denied he knew of on Monday this week?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I was referring to a specific case which I believe the hon. member for Wellington referred to me, and who subsequently discussed with me the details of it. I said I was not aware of the details and wanted the evidence of it. I am investigating this whole practice to see what should be done. I want to refer to the act to see what the powers and obligations are. I do not condone the practice and if there is any way to change that policy I intend to do so.

Mr. O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, has the minister obtained an opinion from the Minister of Justice concerning the legality of this practice prior to judgment being obtained for the amount allegedly owing?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, that will be part of the exercise of determining what should be done.

Oral Questions

FISHERIES

ALLEGED KILLING OF SALMON AS RESULT OF FISH TAGGING PROGRAM—SIZE OF NETS USED

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of the Environment and Fisheries. He has had notice of the question. Did federal fisheries officers in New Brunswick bury hundreds of Atlantic salmon killed during a fish tagging program as alleged, and are his officials using nets of approved size for the fish traps so that salmon can survive?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the answer is that about a dozen salmon were buried. That is a dozen as compared to nine hundred which were also caught in those traps, counted and released again. The net meshes were regulation size and the operation, so far as I can determine, has been carried out as it has been for many years.

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[Translation]

YOUTH

INQUIRY RESPECTING CONTINUATION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a question of the hon. Secretary of State.

Will the Opportunity for Youth program go on being subsidized for the coming years and will further credits be affected to it?

[English]

Hon. James Hugh Faulkner (Secretary of State): That matter, Mr. Speaker, is under examination now.

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COMBINES

ALLEGED COLLUSION BETWEEN OIL COMPANIES TO OBTAIN LARGE PROFITS—REQUEST FOR INQUIRY

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): My question, Mr. Speaker, is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In view of the statement by the United States federal trade commission that large oil companies in that country have obtained profits and returns on investments substantially in excess of what they would receive had there been fair competition, can the minister inform the House whether he intends to order an inquiry into the gouging of consumers by these same companies which are operating in Canada?

● (1530)

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have already informed the House that as a result of a formal complaint under section 7 of the Combines Investigation Act by the Consumers Association of Canada the director of the combines branch has been carrying out a formal inquiry under the act into the petroleum industry.