

Oral Questions

are desperately awaiting government action on the Kirby report's call for a multimillion dollar restructuring strategy. Given that the Government has now had some several months to negotiate such a strategy with the companies involved, with the banks, with the fishermen and the employees of the various plants, is the Minister in a position to tell the House, and through the House, all interested parties, what action it is prepared to take on this urgent problem?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend is referring to a problem of great magnitude that concerns over 60 plants in Atlantic Canada, starting with Quebec, Nova Scotia, and also Newfoundland. This comprises assets of over \$500 million, thousands of employees and 60 plants and, as the Hon. Member knows, the question of industries in the different Provinces is essentially a provincial matter.

● (1450)

Because of the magnitude of it, the federal Government has decided to do its utmost to prevent any major failure of that industry. We are having intensive negotiations with all partners at the moment. For instance, two days ago we had the pleasure to meet here in Ottawa with Premier Peckford. The meeting was chaired by my colleague, the Minister of State for Economic Development and the Minister who represents the Province of Newfoundland. I hope our efforts of the last few months will show up in the very near future in the reopening of as many plants as possible. I cannot guarantee to the Hon. Member that every single plant will reopen. I am working toward a maximum solution—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

COMMITMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDS

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Last night the CBC reported that the federal Government has already made a decision to pump \$100 million into the restructuring strategy to which I made reference in my first question. Will the Minister confirm that report? Will he at least indicate when an official announcement will be made? In connection with that restructuring will he assure the House that any such strategy for restructuring Atlantic fish plants will ensure that the Georgetown Seafoods plant in Prince Edward Island will be allowed to operate as a separate entity, perhaps in the context of an over-all strategy, rather than being the rear end of some larger plant which will smother it and make it impossible for that plant to operate as a viable and profitable entity?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I understand the intention and inspiration of the Hon. Member, but surely he is not asking me to say what level of assistance the federal Government will provide, because that is at the core of the negotiations with the creditors. Surely the Hon. Member expects the Provinces to

play their share. The banks and the financial institutions will also have to put in money. We represent all taxpayers of the country. We are ready to do our share, but it would be most unwise for me to say at the outset what will be the ultimate position of the federal Government. As for this or that plant, that is not the way we are looking at it at this moment. We are trying to revamp the different companies which are technically bankrupt, and after that of course we will have to address each of the different plants.

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[Translation]

FISHERIES

CONFLICTS WITH QUEBEC—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and concerns the fishermen on the Magdalen Islands. There is a conflict between the Federal Government and the Provincial Government. The Federal Government controls fishing licences and the Provincial Government has control over the fishing companies. Is the Minister prepared to settle its problems with the Provincial Government so that the fishermen can get on with their work?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the Hon. Member for his question. It will not doubt interest him to know that representatives of Pêcheurs Unis, and Madelipêche is one of the branches of this company, came to see the Canadian Government to ask for help. Today, I am happy to say that most of the Pêcheurs Unis plants are open again, thanks only to a financial contribution made by the Canadian Government. In two weeks we have already paid more than \$1 million. The first bills paid in order to reopen the plants were accounts with the Government of Quebec, but we are prepared to go that far. The only plant that did not open was the only Pêcheurs Unis plant whose licences the Government of Quebec would like to have. If it is a matter of money or administration, we are prepared to help, but if licences are involved, I think this kind of action for obtaining access to resources is unacceptable.

URGENCY TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS STRESSED

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Madam Speaker, this is a matter of federal-provincial co-operation, and I would like to know whether the Minister realizes that a sit-in is being staged at the Federal offices in the Magdalen Islands and that a solution to these problems is urgently needed so that these fishermen can earn their living.

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, I can inform the Hon. Member that before