

Oral Questions

That regime is based upon a stated respect for pluralism. They, as other regimes, must be held to account to ensure that their behaviour bears some resemblance to their undertakings.

ACCESS TO POLITICAL PRISONERS

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey—White Rock—North Delta): Mr. Speaker, when we were there we learned that they are still maintaining the El Chipote Prison which was begun by Somoza and has probably one of the worst reputations in the world. Along with maintaining that prison, they have prohibited the International Red Cross from visiting political prisoners there.

Would the Secretary of State for External Affairs undertake to make sure that access to that prison is granted to the International Red Cross?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I shall certainly make that representation.

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FISHERIES

NECHAKO RIVER, B.C.—REGULATION OF WATER FLOW

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Since Confederation every Minister of Fisheries has held firmly to the view that the Fisheries Act is supreme in its powers to regulate water flows for the protection of salmon and other matters.

On May 22 the present Minister broke that tradition in siding with Alcan, the Aluminum Company of Canada, to negotiate water flows on the Nechako River in northern B.C., which will directly affect the Fraser River as well.

Would the Minister explain to the hundreds of thousands of British Columbians who will be hurt by this sell-out why he has chosen to place private corporate rights above the common law and common property rights of all Canadians?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the Hon. Member's question and assure him that as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for Canada I do not intend to sell out the interests of the fishery and its important economic value to all Canadians, particularly those in northwestern British Columbia, for any other interest.

However, in the spirit of the habitat policy which I released last October, we believe it essential that we enter into negotiations and discussions with third party interests on the possible conflict and opportunity to harmonize other types of development with the important responsibility I have to ensure that fish populations are not only maintained—that is, the enshrinement of the no net loss principle—but that in fact we

seek a net gain of habitat and the production of that habitat in the area of the fisheries.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, you know full well what the implications of negotiating an out of court agreement on Alcan's 1950 water licence will mean. Thanks to your quick action, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of British Columbia upheld the supremacy of the Fisheries Act in 1980.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Fisheries. He does not seem to understand the fundamental error of what he has done.

Why has the Minister overturned 120 years of Canadian constitutional and common law rulings and placed corporate rights to a common property resource, which is flowing water and fish, above the rights of the owners of these matters, the people of Canada?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, this Minister has not overturned any period of history in the reasonable and balanced approach we are taking to the opportunity or possibility of creating significant employment in the Hon. Member's riding, without doing any damage to the fisheries contained within the area of the Nechako River watershed.

Therefore, I would be more than happy to welcome the Hon. Member and other Members of Parliament from British Columbia who are interested in the issue to sit with me and to receive a full briefing—and we will provide it to all other interested parties—on the options under consideration and the possibility of offsetting remedial measures within the spirit of our habitat policy, which I believe the Member has commended on earlier occasions, in order to achieve an accommodation and to realize additional economic development and jobs in his riding.

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[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REIMBURSEMENT OF EARLY RETIREES—PENALIZED INDIVIDUALS—AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Hon. Members are aware that thanks to the Official Opposition's House Leader, the Government has agreed to call Bill C-50 for debate next Tuesday so that 35,000 early retirees can get their refunds. My question, unfortunately, concerns 2,500 people in Canada who will be penalized as a result of this Bill. They opted for early retirement before January 5, 1986, but for various reasons had to apply for unemployment insurance benefits after that date. This has cost them about