

Inquiries of the Ministry

the Minister of Finance, who is ultimately responsible for government expenditure. In view of the fact that the shipbuilding industry on the west coast is now suffering from a 50 per cent unemployment rate, will the minister give immediate and serious consideration to reinstating the contract that was awarded to Burrard Dry Dock Company Limited in connection with destroyer conversion?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if all questions involving financial matters were addressed to the Minister of Finance I think he would answer nearly every question put in the house. I suggest that this question should be directed to the minister responsible.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Speaker, prior to the recess we were told during our discussion of the budget by the Minister of Finance and by the then minister of national revenue that consideration would be given to industries that were in serious difficulty. Therefore I thought the minister was the logical person to direct my question to.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Winch: The minister did not tell me to whom to address it so may I address it to the Minister of National Defence. In view of the unemployment level prevailing in the shipyards will the Minister of National Defence take under serious consideration the reinstating of the destroyer conversion contract that was allocated to Burrard Dry Dock in North Vancouver?

Hon. Léo Cadieux (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the conversion of the "Restigouche" class was deferred for an indefinite period as a result of the budget restraints imposed upon the Department of National Defence along with other departments. I am very sorry, therefore, but I cannot at this time agree to the suggestion of the hon. member.

Mr. Winch: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I was not referring to general policy. May I ask the minister a question about the contract which was allocated with respect to the conversion of the destroyer *Chaudière*. Will it be reinstated?

Mr. Cadieux (Terrebonne): It will not be, not at this time.

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax): A supplementary question for the Minister of Industry. Can the minister advise us whether the

[Mr. Winch.]

processing of the tenders for the four DDH's—destroyer escorts—has been completed? If so, how soon may we expect the award of these tenders?

Hon. C. M. Drury (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I think I indicated it was expected that a contract could be entered into early in the spring, in March or April. We are working to that deadline.

SHIPPING**BRITISH COLUMBIA—CONSTRUCTION OF RESEARCH AND COASTGUARD VESSELS**

On the orders of the day:

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I hardly know which minister to direct my question to, which minister is "it", so to speak. Will the appropriate minister give immediate attention to not delaying the construction of research and coastguard vessels in British Columbia so that we may keep in Canada many hundreds of skilled shipyard workers who at present are being invited to go to the United States to work under guaranteed employment contracts?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has made her representations and I assume that the minister who is "it" has noted them.

[Translation]

WINTER NAVIGATION ON ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I wished to put a question to the Minister of Transport but in his absence I shall put it to the Acting Prime Minister.

As ice-jams which have formed and are still forming on the St. Lawrence between Montreal and Quebec have caused floods, and as navigable waters like the St. Lawrence come under federal jurisdiction, could the Acting Prime Minister tell us whether the government intends to compensate the victims of these floods?

Hon. Paul Martin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will refer that question to the Minister of Transport.

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question.

Since those ice-jams and floods are due in the first place to the weather and second, mainly to the almost criminal negligence of the Minister of Transport who fails to solve those problems—