

### Oral Questions

As far as fixed wing aircraft are concerned, following an answer in this House a few months ago I have pursued this request with my Department and other qualified people, asking them what would be the advantages of fixed wing aircraft in Newfoundland. The consensus was that this would not be advantageous, that it would be much more advantageous if they had an increased helicopter capability. That is what we have done. There are now three Labrador helicopters. Among these three are the new Labrador helicopters which have been updated with increased capabilities and which will be much more useful in the Eastern region than could a fixed wing aircraft.

**Mr. McGrath:** Madam Speaker, the Minister is trying to put words into my mouth. I did not describe our personnel in search and rescue as incompetent; neither did the Report. What the Report says, and what I say, is that this Government has been incompetent in managing search and rescue.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McGrath:** That is the point of the Report and that is what the Minister has failed to address in his reply.

#### PROVISION OF FIXED WING AIRCRAFT

**Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Madam Speaker, the Report refers to, and I quote:

—better fixed wing aircraft coverage is needed for the far reaches of the area—off Newfoundland, the Arctic and offshore to 30 degrees west longitude.

That is in the report and that is quoted from the Minister's own officials in SAR and the RCC in Halifax. In addition, Judge Soper, in his report on the sinking of the *Patrick Morris*, released in April, 1971, asked for wider dispersal of aircraft and personnel. The Minister's own commanding officer at the RCC Centre in Halifax in December, 1980, said we need more fixed wing aircraft in Newfoundland, and more personnel. Given these facts, why does the Minister insist on flying in the face of the recommendations of his own personnel and not provide more dispersal of fixed wing aircraft and more personnel to man the RCC?

● (1420)

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence):** Madam Speaker, I never said, as the lead Minister for search and rescue, that there would not be a possibility for improvement if we had more resources or more capabilities. I would like to stress the fact to the Hon. Member that the Cross Committee was asked by the Government to evaluate the present situation of search and rescue in Canada and to tell us exactly how we should best handle it. He has referred to 1971; well I am referring to 1982 and to this Government at the moment. We are acting on the three identified issues of search and rescue—that is: improving management, prevention, and the operation itself. I think it is indeed a very positive step

forward to try to refine and improve the search and rescue operation across Canada.

When he asked a previous question about a major system by which we could prevent a major disaster at sea, I think the Hon. Member could look at the *Prinzendam* case where all our resources were sent to try to prevent any loss of life. The *Prinzendam* was a success as far as our search and rescue effort was concerned. Many of the incidents which have occurred in the last ten years have been success stories for search and rescue.

**Mr. McGrath:** Madam Speaker, the Minister will know that the principal recommendations contained in the Cross Report, which he tabled yesterday, were contained in a document by Mr. Cross that was released to Cabinet on February 1, 1982, immediately following the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger*. These recommendations were contained in that report to Cabinet in February of this year.

#### NECESSITY FOR FUNDING

**Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Madam Speaker, my question to the Minister is threefold. First, why did the Government not act on the recommendations of February of this year, by Mr. Cross? Second, can we now expect that there will be a single envelope to finance search and rescue and that there will be an increase in expenditure to provide the additional equipment and personnel recommended by Cross? Third, will there be a single Minister responsible for search and rescue to try to bring management into this chaos which is costing Canadian lives?

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence):** Madam Speaker, as far as the last sentence of the Hon. Member is concerned, I would like to correct it also. In the Cross Report it was indicated that in the incidents which have happened so far no increased capabilities or facilities could have saved any lives. In other words, it was telling us that search and rescue reacted, and acted very well, in all incidents, and that additional lives could not have been saved if our SAR authorities had more capabilities and more facilities. I do not think there has been a cost in lives due to search and rescue competence or incompetence. As far as the Hon. Member's other question about—

**Mr. McGrath:** The budget.

**Mr. Lamontagne:**—the budget, it is obvious that the Cross Report stated that the lead Minister and the administration were well co-ordinated and that they should have their own envelope as far as resources are concerned. The question of the envelope for search and rescue; this is something we will have to discuss with Cabinet soon, before the end of this fiscal year. I will recommend, instead of having part of the budget come from DND and MOT, that we have a budget which is strictly search and rescue and independent of any other envelope.