

Inquiries of the Ministry

Part I recommendations of the Veterans Committee report, would the minister be prepared to introduce legislation immediately based on the Veterans Affairs Committee report so that passage may be effected before the new session?

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my appreciation to my hon. friend for his offer of co-operation. I know his co-operation will be available when we introduce legislation at the next session.

Mr. Marshall: Mr. Speaker, would the minister give a clear indication when that legislation will come before the House?

Mr. Dubé: We will have to wait a few days to see what the order of business will be for the next few months.

FISHERIES**NEGOTIATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION RESPECTING FISHING OFF PACIFIC COAST**

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. At what stage are the negotiations between Canada and the Soviet Union in respect of the fishing operations off Canada's Pacific coast and when does the minister expect to make an announcement in the House concerning the outcome of these negotiations?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might answer that question. The negotiations with the representatives of the Soviet Union are continuing this week. An announcement will be made either late this week or early next week about the results of our negotiations.

DEPLETION OF RESOURCES BY FOREIGNERS—CONVENING OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister a question. In view of the urgency surrounding the depletion of our marine resources by foreign nationals, namely, the Soviet Union, can he indicate if his department and the government are planning to take immediate initiatives to convene an international conference on marine resources involving discussions on management and conservation of the fishing resources off both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Mr. Speaker, we do have a serious problem of overfishing in the North Atlantic. We have two avenues by which we can approach the Russians, for example, and discuss this problem with them. One is the International Commission for Northwest Atlantic Fisheries and we are in continuous contact with member nations including the U.S.S.R. We are also pressing our general approach to shelf matters and fishing in respect of the next Law of the Sea Conference which should be held within the next two years.

Mr. Lundrigan: Can the minister now answer the question whether Canada, in fact, is now prepared to take initiatives to have a specific conference on marine resources in view of the fact that the Law of the Sea Conference is two years away and would get bogged down in discussions about mineral resources, pollution and various other complicated international matters? The question really relates to a conference specifically on marine resources.

Mr. Davis: Well, I think we should use the commission which exists for this purpose. As I said before, we are in continuous discussion with the other North Atlantic Commission countries including the U.S.S.R. in respect of overfishing in the North Atlantic.

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Fisheries. Is the minister prepared to give consideration to expanding the conference currently in progress between the Soviet Union and Canada to include the east coast of Canada?

Mr. Davis: I think not, Mr. Speaker. We have a specific problem on the west coast. We do not have an equivalent in the Pacific of the International Commission for the North Atlantic Fisheries. We have no commission in existence so we are entering into bilateral discussions with the Russians. I think there may be occasions on which we can discuss similar problems on the Atlantic with the U.S.S.R. but as a general rule we would go through the North Atlantic Commission.

Mr. David Anderson (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, could the Secretary of State for External Affairs or the Minister of Fisheries indicate whether the problem of Russian fishing on the west coast, and perhaps the east coast as well, will be discussed by the Prime Minister when he is in the Soviet Union later this fall?

Mr. Davis: I hope so, Mr. Speaker.