

Oral Questions

whether the Minister could confirm today that this document is genuine?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, this is a newspaper clipping that was sent to me by the Hon. Member. I referred the clipping to my Department's legal section and asked the archivists to find out whether such a document existed and what it was about. I have not yet received a reply, but as soon as I do, I shall inform the Hon. Member accordingly.

Mr. La Salle: Madam Speaker, I should be delighted to hand over to the Minister a so-called confidential document, dated March 31, 1970, which acknowledges the monumental error of the Government with respect to land expropriation and makes other recommendations I will not have time to quote in the House today. In the circumstances, could the Minister of Public Works undertake to make this document public, with a view to providing all Canadians with further information on the reasons why, for 14 years, the Government has refused to cede back land to owners who were expropriated and who have reason to accuse the Government of having treated them unfairly?

Mr. LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, first of all, I think the Hon. Member is misinforming the House. It is not a matter of refusing. We have already announced that we were prepared to sell back 30,000 acres. I feel that this is an excellent indication that we are acting in good faith. As for finding out what the document exactly contains, the Hon. Member, who was briefly in the same position I am now, and I am referring to that of having to answer questions, will surely allow me to examine the document if it is transmitted to me and to find out under what conditions it can be made public and to what extent I could or would not be able to comment.

HOUSE RESALE PROGRAM—MIRABEL AREA

Mr. Robert Gourd (Argenteuil-Papineau): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Public Works.

Since I just heard the Hon. Member for Joliette say that the land at Mirabel is badly administered, I would point out to the House that when his Government was in office, it did suggest that the land be handed back to the former owners. Madam Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Public Works to tell the House whether the house resale program in the Mirabel region was successful.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, the fact that a great many people—including many former occupants and owners—jumped at the chance to buy back the houses is a clear indication of the success and generosity of that program. I hope that the Hon. Member will indeed support my efforts to defuse that situation rather than make it worse.

[*English*]

INDUSTRY

WHITE FARM EQUIPMENT LTD.—DEALERS' OFFER TO PURCHASE

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and of his Parliamentary Secretary, perhaps the Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism) could answer this question. It refers to the White Farm Equipment Company. Last week in response to a question put by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Brant, the Minister indicated that the Government would be open to consideration of any kind of bids from companies which were concerned about keeping White Farm equipment as an ongoing concern. The Minister mentioned other points as well.

I wonder whether the Government is aware of the recent offer made by a consortium of some 75 dealers, headed by Mr. John Buhler, a successful businessman, to salvage this company? I would like to know whether the Government is encouraging the receiver to consider this particular offer so that many, many dealers and small businessmen in rural constituencies could remain viable and not go bankrupt if there were a liquidation of White Farm Equipment?

Hon. David Smith (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has in fact been monitoring the situation with regard to White Farm Equipment quite closely. I will take the question as notice in order that he may respond upon his return to the House.

COMPANY'S RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that response from the Minister. When he is making the representation to the appropriate Minister, could the Minister also inquire whether the Government will ensure that various research programs which have been committed, or have been offered to White Farm Equipment, would continue if this bid is successful? As the Minister knows, research is a very important element in the whole operation. May I have the assurance that the Minister will convey this request to the Minister as well?

Hon. David Smith (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Yes.

URGENCY OF ISSUE

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question addressed to the same Minister. The Minister should know that there is a certain amount of urgency about this issue because I understand that tomorrow morning the proposals must be in the hands of the receiver by nine o'clock. If he is going to make representations to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, I would hope that