

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence):** Madam Speaker, first of all I would like to repeat what I said yesterday, that I understand the concern of the hon. member for St. John's East very well, and I also appreciate the motion presented today under Standing Order 43 by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate, and the hon. member for St. John's East.

**An hon. Member:** Why did you say no?

**Mr. Lamontagne:** I can assure hon. members that I will do everything I can in this matter and, further to that, I have already asked my department to examine the possibility of reinforcing the air rescue capabilities in Newfoundland as much as possible, without disrupting the effectiveness of other areas.

As for the recommendations in 1970, to which the hon. member referred, as I said yesterday, a lot has been done as far as improvements to our search and rescue capabilities over the last few years. As I said yesterday, we have initiated many improvements for our helicopters, such as providing long-range fuel tanks, rescue hoists, high-powered search lights, and some improved navigational avionics. In addition, we are currently working on new radar and improved instrumentation. Therefore I think a lot has been done about improving our search and rescue capabilities.

**An hon. Member:** Not enough.

**Mr. Lamontagne:** Maybe in the opinion of some hon. members not enough has been done, but what is enough when we consider the length of coastline we have to cover? I think that this is the important question with which we must deal.

## LACK OF RADAR EQUIPMENT ON HELICOPTERS

**Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Madam Speaker, could the minister state why the rescue helicopters in Newfoundland have not been equipped with weather radar, a fact which rendered them useless during the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy, and why these helicopters do not have the support in Newfoundland of fixed-wing aircraft, which was recommended by a federal inquiry established by the government in 1970?

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence):** Madam Speaker, I have just mentioned to the hon. member the improvements we have made to our search and rescue operations. I think that the hon. member understands the complexity of such an operation. Even with new radar our helicopters would have been unable to take off, in the *Ocean Ranger* incident.

There is another incident off the Magdalen Islands which happened this morning. The aircraft are ready on standby but they cannot reach the area off the Magdalen Islands immediately because of bad weather.

**Mr. Clark:** We have a first-class good-weather rescue capacity.

**Mr. Lamontagne:** I repeat again that with all the opinions, and with people giving all sorts of reactions to the incident, I think the best way to deal with it is to wait until the inquiry recommends what the improvements should be. In the meantime we are doing a lot to improve our capabilities even in Newfoundland. If it is at all possible I will try, on a trial basis, to put fixed-wing aircraft in Newfoundland.

\* \* \*

## FINANCE

## REMISSION ORDER APPLICABLE TO NORTHERN ALLOWANCES

**Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development who has assumed the lead role for the responsibility of finding an alternative to the remission order affecting northern benefits. I would like to ask the minister today whether he has reached a decision on the technique or the regime which should be put in place before the end of this year to replace the remission order. In other words, will the Income Tax Act be used to compensate northerners for the excessive living costs they experience every day?

• (1200)

I would also like to know whether the minister is aware that his responsibility extends below Sixty. There are all kinds of uncongenial isolated environments in the country which lie below Sixty.

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Madam Speaker, in answer to the hon. member's question I would first like to say that I appreciate the work the hon. member has put into the whole question of northern benefits, and we have examined in some detail some of the proposals he has put forward.

Yes, I have had many meetings with some of my colleagues, including the Minister of Finance, with respect to how we should go about doing something constructive about northern benefits, especially once the "moratorium" is over. Various techniques are being explored at the moment. I do not think it would be helpful to speculate at this stage on what technique may be adopted, inasmuch as they are all under active consideration. There has been no firm policy decision taken in terms of my submitting it at this stage to my cabinet colleagues. I can only tell the hon. member we are weighing all the alternatives. We are doing so in a very thorough way, and I hope in combination with my colleagues to have a definite proposal for implementation soon, possibly prior to the end of the moratorium.

## INQUIRY WHETHER HEARINGS WILL BE HELD

**Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River):** Madam Speaker, in coming up with a final position with respect to this crucial problem, which is a very high priority in the north, can the minister tell me what technique he intends to use for the