

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Mr. McGrath: I thank the Hon. Minister for his answer. I hope he will make it loud and clear to the Europeans, now that they have effectively killed this old Canadian industry, that there will not be one metric tonne of fish for them in our zone. That is the message that has to go to them.

KIRBY TASK FORCE REPORT—REQUEST FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago the Minister released the Report of the Kirby Task Force on Atlantic Fisheries. That Report has not been referred to a committee. The Fisheries Committee will be meeting this afternoon, and indeed there will be a delegation of fishermen from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland appearing before that Committee.

Will the Minister formally refer the Kirby Report to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry so that we can deal with very critical questions, one of which is the incomes of inshore fishermen which are, in many instances, I am ashamed to say, well below the poverty level?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I shall certainly consider the Hon. Member's suggestion. I also happen to know that Dr. Kirby will be appearing before the Parliamentary Committee very shortly.

As for the Hon. Member's question, we must ask ourselves who is going to be hurt if tomorrow, we cancel our agreement with the Common Market countries. Are they going to be hurt or is Canada?

What comes to mind is that most of our fish exports go to the United States, and it is therefore in Canada's interests to diversify its markets. Provided the EEC is prepared to settle the fisheries and seal hunt issues to our satisfaction, Canada would certainly be very pleased to enter into an arrangement on fisheries that will be satisfactory to both parties.

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[English]

THE ADMINISTRATION

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIONS BY MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. On February 17, in answer to a question from the Hon. Member for Provencher, the Prime Minister said, as reported at page 22938 of *Hansard*:

Yes, Madam Speaker, we are collectively responsible for the policies of this Government—

The Government as a whole is not collectively responsible for some individual agreement—

Does the Prime Minister stand by that statement and, if so, what are the limits of either mismanagement or chicanery performed by officials of the Government or Members of his Cabinet before the Government feels that it is responsible for them?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I did not quite understand the final part of the Hon. Member's question, but I believe that in the quotation of me that he was citing, I was talking of agreements which are made by individual Ministers or sometimes by officials under the authorities they have by statute or delegation. If someone acts improperly in such circumstances, it is not the whole Government that is acting. If a Minister is acting improperly or illegally, he has to be taken to task. However, one could not condemn the whole Government for some act by an individual, unless the whole Government itself had been part of the decision, much as on the other side of the House, if one Tory Member behaves illegally the whole caucus does not stand condemned.

GOVERNMENT MANDATE

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Is the Prime Minister saying that if there is some kind of serious mismanagement or chicanery in the upper levels of his administration at the beginning of his mandate, the Government has a four-year mandate and can go on its merry way until the next election before it is held responsible?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Not at all, Madam Speaker. If the Hon. Member is talking about the meaning of responsible government, literally, it means that the Government of the day is responsible to Parliament and can only continue exercising its powers with the authority of Parliament, that is, with the support of the majority of the Members of Parliament. That is what responsible government means.

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BANKS AND BANKING

SEIZURE OF FARMS BY ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. We have learned that the banks have been up to their usual skulduggery. The Minister of Finance would only be too sensitive to the fact that Canadian industries have long been forced to be tenants on their own land, and the recent crisis has forced many Canadians to be tenants as well. We learned yesterday that the Royal Bank of Canada has decided to introduce a policy to force farmers off their land, confiscate their land and lease it back to them. It is, in a sense, the twentieth century version of Canadian sharecropping. Is the Minister prepared not to talk but to take action with the Royal Bank of Canada and stop this policy before it proceeds with it any further?