

Oral Questions

Mr. Lalonde: This is well over the increase in expenditures in other countries by United States subsidiaries.

Mr. McCain: That is over last year. What about five years ago?

Mr. Lalonde: Second, I remind my friend that offshore expenditures in the Atlantic provinces, which are of concern to him, will increase very significantly this year. We have taken steps to encourage development in the oil and gas industry. These are taking place at the present time. If my hon. friend takes the trouble of inquiring as to what is happening offshore in his own province, he will find out what is happening in eastern Canada at the present time.

DEVELOPMENT OF HIBERNIA FIELD

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He will know that last March the government of Newfoundland submitted a very reasonable compromise proposal to which the minister has not yet responded. The proposal called for revenue-sharing, management-sharing, and joint ownership, to get on with the development of the important Hibernia field and was approved in the provincial election by the people of Newfoundland.

Now that the SIU question of jurisdiction has been set aside and now that the Alsands deal has been shattered, will the minister sit down with the government of Newfoundland to discuss this very reasonable compromise proposal so that Canada can get on with developing the very important Hibernia field?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, obviously the Government of Canada is very interested in developing the Hibernia field, an area which is the property of all Canadians. On January 25 the government of Newfoundland put forward a proposal. We let our views be known on that proposal. There were meetings of officials on February 3 and February 4 in Montreal, at which time we gave a reaction and also enunciated a number of views on the subject as far as we were concerned.

We also indicated on February 15 to the government of Newfoundland that we would come up very soon with a full-fledged, fully-developed counteroffer as far as we were concerned. The government of Newfoundland preferred to walk away from the negotiating table at the time, took us to court, and then decided to hold an election. We did not walk away from the negotiating table. We have been there ever since, but no one showed up from the other side. We are not that touchy on these issues.

● (1440)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: Today my office has been in touch with the office of the minister of energy for Newfoundland. I suggested that we should hold a meeting within the next few days.

LABOUR CONDITIONS

CLOSURE OF FISH PLANT AT PRINCE RUPERT, B.C.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration and concerns the closure of the B.C. Packers' Seal Cove facility at Prince Rupert. I think the minister is aware that over the last 70 years the facility has operated both viably and profitably. The question of the closure was raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni, on April 7. The minister indicated at that time that he would meet with representatives of the workers from that plant on April 23 while he was in British Columbia. That meeting never took place despite the fact the workers asked for it.

Since it is fairly clear that the operation is economically viable and increased from one million pounds in 1974 to nine million pounds last year, would the minister do two things? Number one, would he instruct that there be a marketing analysis of the groundfish operation and, number two, would he at least keep that plant in operation until such time as that marketing analysis is completed?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, the hon. member suggests that I was to meet with the workers. I indicated that if we had an invitation, we would do so. When I was in Vancouver, I did meet with many of the organizers of the B.C. Federation of Labour and discussed a wide range of items. At the time, we were meeting in an open, public forum.

However, I would say in answer to his request that we are certainly prepared to help and work within the limits of our department within a variety of labour adjustment areas, but we are not in a position to offer the kind of support the hon. member is recommending. That is something which would have to be negotiated with the provincial government and others in terms of considering what kind of assistance might be available. We have a wide variety of programs at the federal level. We can offer them. However, in some cases there are serious problems in markets, and we would have to look to see what they possibly could be. Therefore, I will ask my department to continue to meet with the employees and employers to see what might be done, but I am not so sure that the hon. member's suggestion is an appropriate one.

SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): My supplementary question, Madam Speaker, is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. It concerns the philosophy, which seems to be predominant on that side of the House, involved in supporting industries which are bankrupt or are not able to stay afloat, whether the industry is Consolidated Computers or something else. The fish plant in Prince Rupert has operated for 70 years, it employs 250 people and provides \$7 million a year to the local economy. This year B.C. Packers has written off or deferred \$8.5 million in taxes, and has two \$10 million deals going on right now with the cabinet in British Columbia. I wonder if the