

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not agree but the Prime Minister does. The Prime Minister, speaking at a press conference on February 23, 1990, said: "We want to do everything we possibly can to help the British Columbia fishery".

Can the minister give us any details, such as dates of implementation, estimated costs, nature of programs, with respect to the salvation promised by the Prime Minister just three months ago?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must be pleased to see this council coming to Ottawa complaining that money should be thrown at the problem because money is being thrown at the problem everywhere.

The reality is that this ruling to which the hon. member refers under the free trade agreement reached between Canada and the United States forces not one fisherman—not one—in B.C. to sell to the Americans. Do not forget this.

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JUSTICE

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg—St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Evidence is piling up in the David Milgaard case. There is mounting evidence that there was a terrible miscarriage of justice when Milgaard was sentenced for murder 20 years ago.

A second forensic report, this time from the chief medical examiner of Manitoba, seriously questions the only physical evidence that linked Milgaard to the crime. Yet all we get from the Department of Justice is foot dragging and silence.

When is this minister going to take her responsibility seriously and decide what she is going to do about David Milgaard?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, it is hard not to be cross with the hon. member—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): —who has questioned me on this issue at great length before the standing committee, and who has been given an explanation as to why it has taken some time for the Department of Justice to deal with this.

He knows perfectly well that that delay results not from delays in the Department of Justice but from the applicant himself, whose counsel has brought forward continuing pieces of new information that he wishes to have considered on behalf of his client.

I think it would be extremely negligent of the Department of Justice to rush this process and to tell Mr. Milgaard's counsel that there is an arbitrary deadline beyond which he may not bring new evidence forward to be considered.

In May of this year the applicant retained the services of Manitoba's chief medical examiner to provide a report on a previous forensic report that had been commissioned. That report has now been received by the Department of Justice. It is being reviewed and will be part of the considerations on which I will make my decision.

If Mr. Milgaard's counsel comes forward with more information, I am prepared to wait until I can consider that as well so that he may have the fairest possible hearing based on the fullest possible information that he can provide to us.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Solicitor General.

For 20 years Milgaard has denied consistently his guilt. For that he has paid a high price. He has been denied parole—no confession, no parole. Just today, he was scheduled to appear before the Parole Board.

Given the unique aspects of this case and given the fact that there is a possibility of a wrongful conviction, would the Solicitor General be prepared to recommend a full parole for Milgaard?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague the Minister of Justice, has just indicated that she is looking into the question, awaiting further information apparently from Mr. Milgaard's counsel. Therefore, I think it is being handled in the appropriate way by the Department of Justice.