

Oral Questions

I want to assure the hon. member that we are watching the situation very closely and doing everything we can within the means that we have to manage these levels. As the hon. member knows, there is no way of managing the water coming in from Lake Erie. It causes us some concern. Perhaps the Minister of Agriculture prayed a little too much last fall. The water levels from last fall were a problem also.

The hon. member will appreciate that if we allow too much water to escape from Lake Ontario there could be trouble at the other end at Lac Saint-Louis in the Montreal area. I assure the hon. member that we are watching the situation very closely.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. minister knows that watching the lake very carefully is not going to stop it from rising, as it is doing every minute at the present time. As this situation was brought about by catering solely to the wishes of the shipping companies which use the St. Lawrence Seaway, will the government start now to look after the needs of those living and working on the shores of Lake Ontario, instead of only paying attention to the wishes of the shipping companies which contribute so generously to Liberal campaign funds?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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FISHERIES

IRISH MOSS FISHERY IN MARITIMES

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment. More than a year ago, in January, 1977, the minister made an announcement regarding changes in the Irish moss fishery in the maritimes. These changes referred to deficiency payments, new regulations, active exploration of new markets and stabilization of markets with respect to Irish moss.

I know the minister has received representations recently, specifically from the Prince County Fishermen's Association and perhaps other groups, with regard to the very difficult year which they experienced last year. They requested an extension of the deficiency payments and inquired as to how much success the minister has had in attempting to stabilize and improve the market situation for Irish moss. Has the minister responded to those urgent requests? Can he give a brief reply to the House?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I will have to check the record. I know representations were made to my office. As the hon. member knows, a decision on possible assistance to those fishermen would depend on the Fisheries Prices Support Board. I will check with the chairman and inform the hon. member.

[Mr. Marchand.]

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

PRICE-FIXING ARRANGEMENT RESPECTING IRISH MOSS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is aware of a recent report which I sent to the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment on the Irish moss fishery. I should like to direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, if I can have his attention.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I do not mean to disturb him during question period when he is reading his fan mail. A recent report released by the Social Action Commission of the diocese of Charlottetown on the state of the Irish moss fishery in Prince Edward Island cited the testimony of a former vice-president of one of the major foreign buyers of Irish moss, Marine Colloids Ltd. It concerned an arrangement made among three multinational companies in 1975 to fix buying practices in a way which would drive the newly-formed co-operative, the P.E.I. Marine Plants Co-op, out of business.

Is the minister aware of these serious charges? Has he initiated, or is he aware of any investigation within his department on attempting to fix prices in this manner? These three companies virtually control the Irish moss market, nationally and internationally. Is he prepared to refer this matter, if it has not been investigated, to the Combines Investigation Branch for investigation and possible prosecution?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have heard about this problem. I do not recall receiving any letter similar to the one referred to by the hon. member. I would be pleased to look into it and refer the matter to the director, if that is appropriate.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

HOUSING—PROGRESS REPORT ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH PROVINCES

Mr. Dean Whiteway (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the hon. Minister of State for Urban Affairs, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations. It has to do with the announcements made yesterday by the Minister of State for Urban Affairs regarding the new initiatives by the federal government in the area of housing, and specifically with regard to RRAP and NIP.

Because the minister obviously has been part of the negotiations with the provinces, can he tell the House whether any consensus has been reached with the provinces in the area of housing, which is clearly within the jurisdiction of the provinces?