

Oral Questions

On the weekend thousands of Cape Bretoners marched in Sydney calling for jobs and dignity. Today Stora Forest Industries, one of the island's most important employers, laid off 30 employees, some of whom have been working there for up to five years. Come Christmas the whole mill, 1,000 workers, will be shut down because of the desperate state of the Canadian forest industry. Hundreds of fish plant workers will lose their jobs if fish quotas are cut again this year.

Will the Prime Minister recognize the gravity of this situation and convene a special meeting of his officials and local leaders to deal with this urgent situation?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member points to Cape Breton and the difficulties that people are experiencing there. He will acknowledge I am sure that the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and other government agencies are trying to work with the people of Cape Breton to try to alleviate those problems.

We would like to be able to tell the hon. member that we can change this overnight. He knows it is impossible. In the meantime programs under employment and immigration are available for the people who have to adjust to the reality of the difficulty there.

I am ready and officials in the department are ready to continue working with the people of Cape Breton to try to improve their situation.

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also for the Prime Minister.

The crisis in the Cape Breton economy is a direct result of his government's high tax, high dollar and high unemployment policies. His prosperity propaganda has been calling for partnership. Why will he not show some partnership with Cape Bretoners and direct his senior officials to work out with our local leaders an urgent program for economic recovery?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may try to make the people in Cape Breton believe that this all started with the economic policy that we are pursuing. However, even I and young Atlantic Canadians remember prior to 1984. Never has a government pursued an economic policy which translates right now into lower

inflation and into lower interest rates. Even in Cape Breton they will acknowledge that low interest rates is the best way of creating jobs.

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FISHERIES

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Foreign overfishing continues to decimate the fish stocks and wipe out jobs by the thousands in Atlantic Canada. In the last year alone she will know that the European community caught 98,000 tonnes on the Grand Banks, six times the allowable quota. This has been going on for seven years, the first four of which the government was absolutely silent on the problem and the last three of which the government has paid lip service to the issue.

Will she now admit that her colleague's rhetoric has not worked the magic that had been hoped for, and will she indicate what plan B is to get the Europeans off the backs of the fishermen down there?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, neither my colleague nor myself indulge in empty rhetoric. We have worked extraordinarily hard. We have a special ambassador who is dealing with the fishery issue with the European community.

I spoke with the Portuguese foreign minister, the incoming president of the European community, at the NATO summit. We are going to stay in touch on this issue. He knows of our grave concern. He is personally sympathetic to our interests and we will continue to work very hard both directly and through our ambassador.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): He is showing his continued sympathy by allowing his fishermen to continue to rape the fish stocks out there. The Newfoundland premier, Mr. Wells, says that the time for diplomacy has all but run out and calls for some bolder action. He has called for an international police force to counteract the overfishing piracy.

Is it the intention of this government to pursue the idea of a police force, which I understand the fisheries minister favours? Is this minister prepared to pursue that idea with the other affected countries, or what is her