

*Oral Questions*

decline in gulf cod landings recorded since 1960 by the federal department of fisheries.

The cod industry in western Newfoundland is in crisis. I want to ask the minister of fisheries what action the Government of Canada is going to take to rebuild the gulf cod stocks and what action, both immediate term and long term, the Government of Canada is going to take to assist the fishermen and fish plant workers who are being dislocated, displaced economically, because of this crisis in the gulf cod stocks.

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to manage the gulf fishery in accordance with the advice which we receive from CAFSAC and our Canadian scientists.

There has been a considerable decrease in the total allowable catch of the cod stocks in the gulf in the last several years, and in accordance with the scientific advice the total allowable catches have been reduced.

There is not any immediate crisis that I know of in that particular stock at the present time, with the exception that we have had to restrict mobile gear vessels because of the size of the cod that were being caught and because of some other activities which had to be discouraged.

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte):** Mr. Speaker, this member wants to assure the House that I want to work with the minister and with the government, but it is difficult to do that when the minister says there is not any crisis, when landings have gone from over 90 million pounds in 1982 down to 30-odd million pounds in 1991, and when there has been a 67 per cent decline in cod landings.

I want to quote to the minister from a report done for him by his department in December 1990, by William Steele of the program co-ordination and economics in the gulf region office. The report says in its conclusion, and I quote from the minister's own report: "The cod industry in western Newfoundland is in a crisis. The fixed gear fishery in western Newfoundland is at a point of no return if there is no strategy to rebuild the cod stocks in the near future".

That report is 24 months old and the rate of decline has continued over the last 24 months. What has the minister done since December 1990 to halt this crisis in decline in cod stocks? What is he doing now to rebuild

those cod stocks and to assist the fishing families who are severely affected by this crisis; yes, a crisis in the cod fishery?

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, there are no new figures being produced by the hon. member today.

**Ms. Copps:** There is no new fish either.

**Mr. Crosbie:** If I am allowed to answer I will answer. There is nothing new in the figures that have been announced by the hon. gentleman today. These total allowable catches were set some months ago based on the scientific advice we received from CAFSAC, from the Canadian scientists.

Because the hon. member rises in this House and shouts across the House does not make a situation a crisis. The cod stocks in the gulf are certainly cause for worry. Small cod were being caught in large numbers which had to be stopped, particularly by mobile gear vessels. The facts have been known for months and there is no sudden crisis today in the gulf.

**Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's):** Mr. Speaker, for some reason the minister is choosing today to downplay this problem. He knows that fishery in the gulf and the Atlantic fishery generally are in an absolute tailspin.

He has seen the numbers for 3PN and for 4R. They are even worse than the numbers for northern cod, as bad as they are. I say to him that no other industry in Canada is being so pulverized. This is the prairie drought of the 1930s.

People in his riding and mine are losing their homes. They are having their cars repossessed. They cannot buy the groceries. They need some money now. What is he going to do about it?

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, we all know with reference to the northern cod stock that in the province of Newfoundland in particular there is a serious problem in connection with the fishery. We also know other stocks are under heavy pressure.

There is no sudden emergency that has just occurred with reference to other fisheries. There are difficulties in other fisheries as well. We have brought in programs, as we did last year, to meet those difficulties. I refer to the