

Oral Questions

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, we want a better country.

Last night on the CBC newscast, the minister seemed unclear as to whether this declaration of his meant that the government was creating a third level of government, a third level that many people at the municipal and provincial levels and indeed aboriginal people themselves are very uneasy with.

After a night of reflection will the minister tell the Canadian people whether his declaration yesterday will indeed create a third level of government in Canada?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I was asked that question last night on CBC to which I responded that it was a tough question. It still is.

We do not look at this as creating a third level of government. We look at this as developing what exists from the Two Row Wampum treaties of hundreds of years ago through the Constitution, the Guerin case and the Sparrow case to what we have today: the policy of this government that the inherent right of self-government exists. It is something we are committed to and something we intend to implement fairly and justly within four years.

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SALMON FISHERY

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, this is my first intervention in the House. I would like to congratulate you for being elected Speaker of the House of Commons.

• (1445)

The balance of salmon interceptions under the Pacific Salmon Treaty has tipped significantly in U.S. favour since the treaty was signed in 1985. The imbalance is worsening. U.S. fishermen enjoy the benefits of increasing stocks of Canadian sockeye while Canada's interception of U.S. coho and chinook continues to decline.

In 1993 Canada and the United States failed to reach an agreement concerning long term salmon fishery management plans. The one year management plan that was accepted expired this year. So far negotiations have been long and protracted.

What is the status of these negotiations?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver East for her excellent question and her interest in this matter.

Despite all the efforts of the Government of Canada to negotiate on these matters relating both to conservation and to the question of equity raised by my hon. friend, we have now arrived at an impasse in our negotiations with the American negotiators.

Consequently I have had discussions with my colleagues, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister for International Trade and with colleagues from the province of British Columbia.

Having received advice from our negotiator as well as from Canada's Pacific salmon commissioners, I have instructed our negotiator, Yves Fortier, to advise his American counterpart that we will not be participating in the next round of negotiations and that progress cannot be made until the Americans are ready to implement an equity agreement.

This government is committed to conservation and a sensible management plan, but it is committed as well to protecting the interests of Canadian fishermen in British Columbia.

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[Translation]

CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier-Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General of Canada.

I was stunned to hear yesterday on the news that corner store owners in Saint-Eustache had their backs to the wall and were openly going to violate the law by selling contraband cigarettes. This clearly shows that Canadians are getting more and more frustrated by the government's lack of action regarding this contraband problem.

My question is: Does the minister intend to call on the RCMP to enforce the law in Saint-Eustache?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I will inquire with the RCMP concerning the issue raised by the hon. member. I too believe that the law must be enforced and I will provide the hon. member with a more detailed answer as soon as possible.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier-Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, in that case, could the minister also tell me what he intends to do to enforce the law everywhere, including eight kilometres away from Saint-Eustache, where offenders sell cigarettes illegally and very openly?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, we intend to make sure that all Canadians respect the law.