

Oral Questions

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ but we did not know what the EC commission and council adopted and announced today.

I must say I find it unacceptable, in fact offensive, that the elected members of the European council would endorse quotas of northern cod just outside our 200-mile limit in the amount of 32,000 metric tonnes when we are having difficulty finding enough fish to go around for our Canadian fish plant workers and fishermen.

This contradicts all principles of international stewardship toward the resources of our oceans, and Canada will register its offence at this action in the strongest possible way.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the minister claims that he was unaware of the European decision. I spoke before him and I spoke before the Minister for International Trade and I mentioned that in the House. If he is not aware of what is happening in Europe, how can he pretend to represent the people of Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Siddon: Mr. Speaker, we were aware of a report by the EC scientific council to the council of the European community which suggested a significant lowering of European quotas, in fact compliance with six quotas in the NAFO managed stocks.

• (1450)

In fact the council overruled those recommendations and increased the unilateral quotas totally contrary to long-standing agreements reached at the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization that quotas, for example, of northern cod should be zero; not one codfish, not one pound of fish more than zero.

I repeat that we find the 32,000 metric tonne quota far in excess of anything that is practically justifiable. It is offensive.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

One year after the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement accelerated tariff reductions on furniture produc-

tion items from the United States, an 86-cent dollar, and high interest rates are causing large furniture manufacturers to wind down operations and to move south. Several large manufacturing firms have already set up plants in the southern United States.

This Friday, Goldcrest Furniture in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence is closing its doors and putting 120 skilled labourers, production employees, out of work and sealing the fate of a further 120 others.

Where does the minister suggest that these and other workers seek employment as the Canadian furniture industry is slowly but surely killed by her government's policies?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the House that my riding is right next to the hon. member's. The people on this side of the House are always concerned when there are lay-offs, as there are from time to time in any economy, and particularly in a booming economy where there are new jobs coming along every day.

I would point out to him that in his riding as well as in mine there is full employment.

Mr. Volpe: Mr. Speaker, since we are talking about geography, my riding is the one that has middle class and working class as well as an industrial base. It is not Forest Hill like hers.

It is the government's policy that is killing jobs. There are 26,000 employers from the furniture industry that are already operating at a dollar level that is eight cents above its competitive level. Government policies are responsible for a 29 per cent increase in U.S. furniture exports to Canada over this year, resulting in a 54.5 per cent decrease in trade surplus in U.S. furniture items.

How can this minister stand idly by when her government's policies are destroying employment opportunities in Canada and transferring them down south?

Mrs. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, clearly the hon. member does not know his own riding any better than he knows mine. Let me point out to him that in the city from which we come, as in other parts of Canada, there are individuals who are experiencing temporary economic difficulties.