

of this problem. This raises the question whether the swordfishing industry should be placed in this position because of tests which have been carried out. It questions the validity of the tests and whether they are accurate. I wish to place on record parts of an article which appear in the February 16, edition of the *Ottawa Journal*. The article is entitled "The Great Mercury Mistake". In view of the importance of this industry and the fact that Atlantic Canada is a depressed area, we cannot afford any mistakes that will add to the unemployment we already have.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crouse: I do not know where the regional desks are which advise the Liberal party. If they are functioning, Mr. Chairman, they should be made aware that there are 675,000 unemployed people in Canada. We have more than our fair share of unemployment in Atlantic Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crouse: It is time we stopped playing politics and got down to the nitty-gritty of this issue. It is time we tried to do something not for our political parties but for the people of Canada who sent us here and expect us to do something about the problem.

An hon. Member: All they do is laugh.

Mr. Crouse: Some members may laugh. I read my mail daily. Some of the pleas I receive and forward to members of the cabinet are not funny, Mr. Chairman: they are no laughing matter.

Mr. Bell: Watch your language.

Mr. Crouse: Thank you Mr. Whip. I will try to watch my language. I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to statements made in this article as follows:

Even the best scientist using the most sensitive and accurate instrument techniques can make mistakes.

In the case of what may become known as "The Great Mercury Mistake of 1970," the public may have become unduly alarmed about reported contamination of important Canadian foodstuffs.

Or at least so thinks Dr. Emmanuel Somers of the federal food and drug directorate (FDD).

And Dr. Somers attempted Monday to set the scientific record straight at the special symposium on Mercury in Man's Environment, sponsored by the Royal Society of Canada and attended by some of the world's leading mercury experts.

Dr. Robert Jervis, a University of Toronto chemist, had reported in May at a Toronto chemical meeting that he had uncovered an "alarming" level of about 0.4 parts per million of mercury in Manitoba wheat flour gathered by federal health officials the previous November.

The accepted maximum level for mercury in food products is 0.5 ppm. Dr. Jervis reported similar levels of mercury in samples of wheat.

Concerned FDD officials, on receiving seven of the wheat and flour samples back from Dr. Jervis, ran some tests of their own later in the summer. They used a technique called atomic absorption, which produced results about one per cent of those reported by Jervis. A later check using neutron activation analysis, the same technique used by Jervis, produced similarly small results.

Government Organization Act, 1970

For example, Dr. Jervis had reported a level of 0.4 ppm. of mercury in a wheat sample. The FDD and other private laboratories revealed levels of 0.007 and 0.012 ppm. of mercury in portions of the same sample.

Similarly, where Jervis showed 0.38 ppm in flour, the FDD and other labs showed 0.007 and 0.010 ppm of mercury.

As a further confirmation, FDD experts believe, a larger "basket" survey of foods purchased in Ottawa area stores in 1969 had shown there were no residues of mercury above the detection limit of the technique used, 0.02 ppm.—

Dr. Somers emphasized that no analytical technique is free from error.

And he criticized the public news media for publicizing what he considered to be unsubstantiated "startling" findings.

These facts are very relevant to the situation which exists today. The federal Department of Fisheries have carried out tests on swordfish. We do not know the method they used or the accuracy of their tests. We do know that the fishermen have contributed fish to the Department of Fisheries, in one case over \$34 worth which the federal government is unable to pay for. They have taken samples of fish. The fisherman waiting to sell his fish not only cannot sell his catch but cannot get payment for the samples taken by the federal government for testing. This is the way in which the fishermen are being treated. The Minister of Fisheries who will assume responsibility for this industry must take it much more seriously than at present. I gave the minister every kudos this afternoon for being one of the best Liberal fisheries ministers we have ever had—but his work is far from finished. If he is of the opinion that he can now lay the fishing industry aside and go on to other things, he has another thought coming.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crouse: In a press release to Members of Parliament on December 10 it is stated:

The offshore catch has increased since 1960, and the inshore catch has fallen off as a result of increased activity out over Canada's continental shelf.

Fisheries and Forestry Minister Jack Davis said: "While fishing with foreign fleets does not conflict with the international law it threatens to deplete our fish stocks. Overfishing has occurred in important areas off Newfoundland and Labrador and entire species are in danger of extinction. This cannot go on—"

I agree with the minister 100 per cent that this must stop. What action has the minister taken since this statement was issued that is in any way stopping the overfishing on our offshore banks? I submit there has been no action. What has been the result. The result is that we have yet another industry in Nova Scotia going to the wall. I refer to the saltfishing industry. The minister and his government established the Saltfish Corporation. One of the stipulations in the corporation being established was that the provinces of Atlantic Canada would have to participate in order to be able to buy salt codfish. In answer to a question I directed to the minister recently, he stated that only two provinces, Newfoundland and Quebec, were today participating provinces. Where does this leave those who have a tremendous investment in the saltfishing industry in my native province of Nova Scotia, or those who have an investment in Prince Edward Island or New Bruns-