

Oral Questions

livelihoods of thousands and thousands of his own constituents.

Will the minister put the job security of those plant workers and those fishermen ahead of his own and tell the Prime Minister he can no longer aid and abet this cowardly bungling on the overfishing issue?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I am one of the few members of this House, if not the only member, who has ever resigned from a cabinet. I would be unafraid to resign from another cabinet if I felt it was not doing its duty for this country, but that is not the case. This government and this cabinet have done more with respect to the question of foreign overfishing and more to assist fishermen in Newfoundland and elsewhere in Atlantic Canada than any predecessor.

The problem of foreign overfishing is not a question of political will. It is a question of international law, that this country has no authority or jurisdiction whatsoever outside the 200 mile economic zone that was accepted by the world in 1977. That does not mean to say that our patience is inexhaustible. We have campaigns under way, I will not go into them now, for this year and we will be dealing with this matter in a forthright and an even more dedicated way than in the past during this calendar year.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, there he goes again. He continues as he has been doing to make some vague mutterings about what he might do a year or two down the road and in the same mouthful says he cannot do anything. Well, we do not have a year. What is the minister going to do, I ask him, now that his sweet talk has failed him and now that he has been abandoned by his political cronies over there. The only tool he has left is his integrity, and he has a lot of that. I ask him, will he put that on the line to light a fire under the Prime Minister to get this thing moving?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I do not have to put a match under the Prime Minister for him to do something. We are not in the kind of difficulty that the opposition party

is in. The Prime Minister has already brought this subject up and pressed these points home in meetings with President Delors and other leaders of the European Community, and he is going to continue doing that.

I met with him last night to discuss and plan what our next moves will be. We have his full support and he will be an invaluable help in this cause during this year.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

There are thousands of Atlantic Canadians who could be within days of losing their jobs. Certainly we are all concerned about the consequences for the people of Atlantic Canada.

The government was warned of the situation in the fishing industry two years ago and did nothing. The government was warned many years ago about the cost of overfishing the Atlantic region and did nothing. The Minister of Finance just said that they are getting the fundamentals right in the economy. Well, they did not get the fundamentals right for Atlantic Canadians. They did not get the fundamentals right for those Atlantic fishermen.

I want to ask the government and the Deputy Prime Minister why two years were wasted and what the government plans to do for those Atlantic Canadians who would be put out of work because of this government's mismanagement.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, to say that the government was warned two years ago and did nothing may be fine as a piece of rhetoric, but it is certainly not factual.

Several years ago the government was told, not warned, by its scientific advisers that the advice given by them in the previous three years was inaccurate and they had to revise all of their forecasts. The government acted on that. The total allowable catch of northern cod has been reduced from 266,000 tonnes a year to 185,000 in the present year. That was action.

The Atlantic Fisheries Adjustment Program totalling \$584 million was brought in to deal with the consequences. Is that nothing, or is the hon. lady opposite just