

Oral Questions

ment of that province did not see fit to follow through that idea and I regret very much that the fishermen, especially the inshore fishermen, will find it very difficult to dispose of this catch of cod which is rather plentiful at this time.

Mr. McGrath: Now that we have a full-scale shutdown of the industry at the height of the inshore season, and given the tragic consequences this could have for our fishermen, especially this coming winter, has the minister considered making provision to enable the Canadian Saltfish Corporation to buy over-the-side fish which could be salted, given the excellent market for good quality saltfish?

Mr. LeBlanc: When events seemed to forecast a strike I asked the corporation to make sure that the extra supply of salt which might be required was put into reserve. This was done. I also asked the corporation to envisage the measures it would undertake if, in fact, there was delivery of fish to its agents which they could not handle. As hon. members know, through an act of this Parliament the corporation must buy all the cured fish offered to it by fishermen. Of course, I will support the corporation in its endeavour to meet the needs of the fishermen. This being said, I must add that if the industrial dispute is prolonged even the best efforts of the corporation will not fully meet the needs.

Mr. McGrath: Has the minister measured the impact which this costly shutdown could have on our principal, indeed our only, market for frozen groundfish—the U.S. market?

● (1420)

This leads me to ask the minister if he is in a position to tell the House and the country whether or not he has succeeded in reopening negotiations with the European Economic Community which, as he knows, went off the rails a few months ago, in an effort to get tariff concessions to have access to Canadian groundfish and to that very important market?

Mr. LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, negotiations with the community have not gone as well as we would have liked. The fact is that in terms of bargaining for access to the Canadian zone as against access for Canadian products entering the community, we felt the price which was asked was a bit high. Our industry representatives, both union and processors, felt that we should take some time to reflect and re-examine market conditions. It is obvious that we may find ourselves with a very low inventory if the plant closures predicted by the hon. member and which appear to be inevitable take place right now.

The problem with the community is really one of judgment as to whether the price which has been asked of Canada is reasonable or is too high. That certainly must be a subject of discussion with all representatives of the industry, and I hope they will take place in a more serene atmosphere than what we now have in Newfoundland.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**ALBACORE TUNA—APPROACHES MADE BY UNITED STATES NEGOTIATORS**

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Madam Speaker, my question is supplementary, but it is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. There are fairly reliable indications that the albacore tuna will again be in Canadian waters within the next ten days or so. If these tuna are followed by U.S. fishermen, the fishermen could be arrested. There are also indications that the U.S. negotiators on fisheries and boundary matters on the west coast have made offers, on at least one and possibly two occasions, to enter into negotiations with regard to the albacore tuna to avoid a head-on clash.

Could the minister tell the House whether or not he is aware of these approaches and, if so, what his response has been and, if not, what steps he will take to ensure himself that we are not faced with a head-on clash once again?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, we have not yet begun negotiations with the United States. We are hoping to do soon. The American position has not been entirely satisfactory to us, but we look forward to good negotiations.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Madam Speaker, is the Secretary of State for External Affairs aware that a head-on clash at this time with the arrest of U.S. fishermen in Canadian waters could extend the embargo against the landing of fish, not just of tuna but of other species, in U.S. ports to the detriment of all fishermen on both coasts?

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, there is considerable question as to whether U.S. action of that kind is legitimate under GATT. We are investigating our rights in that respect.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans consult with his colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in order to determine the state of play here on the albacore tuna matter—because it is only a few days off—rather than have a head-on collision and the possible danger which he recognizes, if the Secretary of State does not and, also, in order to give the Canadian tuna fishermen an opportunity to reap some of the harvest which will be available on the west coast.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, obviously, I have been in close consultation with my colleague. This situation exemplifies the sort of support one can find on one coast for negotiations on another coast. In fact, it is the New Brunswick industry which has been the subject of tariff impact from the United States. But recognizing the importance of these negotiations for Canadian fishermen generally, there have been very few complaints from New Brunswick. Of course, we recognize the importance of the issue, but surely the hon. member does not advocate giving in to the sort of pressure which he is advocating.