

Oral Questions

Can the minister tell us why the government completely forgot about the fishermen in these provinces? Or maybe the government still believes, as does the Prime Minister, that all these people seem to be happy and doing fine?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman should know that the program announced a week ago today by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is the Atlantic Fisheries Adjustment Program. It certainly applies to New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia.

With respect to the province of Quebec, the Minister of Fisheries is prepared to discuss with the province of Quebec whatever program may be particularly needed in that province.

In addition, this program concentrates on the problems of the fishery, particularly with respect to the offshore and in connection with the total allowable catches that were recommended as a result of scientific advice and the interim report of the Harris committee this year.

The inshore fishery with particular reference to Newfoundland and Labrador has not been affected in so far as total allowable catches go because the allowance remains at 115,000 tonnes this year. If the fish strike in and we have a good fishery there, that is one situation. If it is a poor fishery, that will have to be dealt with later.

With respect to the question of whether it is new money or not, this is usually something the hon. member asks. He asks his old canard. This is money in Canadian currency, and it is all new money.

With respect to rebuilding the fish stocks, the \$150 million under that heading is all new money that was not provided for before.

Mr. Robichaud: Taken away from other programs.

Mr. Crosbie (St. John's West): Just wait now. The hon. gentleman wanted to know if it is new, old, in between or tattle-tale gray. I am telling him.

For economic diversification there is \$146 million, which is all new money never provided for before in the Estimates.

That is \$146 million plus \$130 million. I have missed \$130 million for adjusting to current realities, which is all new money.

Add up \$130 million, plus \$150 million, plus \$146 million and what do you get? A hell of a lot of new money.

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): My supplementary is for the same minister.

The whole lobster industry is in a severe crisis. Fishermen are receiving prices that do not even cover their operating costs.

Will the minister come up with a price support program—new money—for the lobster fishermen? Or will he just offer to promote the sale of lobster at prices that will drive the fishermen out of the lobster industry. Is that what the government is offering?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the lobster season has really just begun in its fullest sense at the present time. There is a problem with lobster because there is an over-supply in so far as the markets are concerned.

• (1440)

The way in which one can attempt to overcome that is to try to increase the demand. That is what the minister is attempting to do. He announced a program involving \$2.4 million on May 11 with the fisheries ministers of P.E.I. and New Brunswick to promote New Brunswick and P.E.I. lobster during the next three years.

In addition, the Departments of External Affairs and International Trade have launched promotional efforts for lobster in more than 20 foreign posts abroad.

Various fairs, missions and market intelligence activities are planned to enhance the diversification of processed lobster to encourage the development of new products in an attempt to overcome this problem, which is not a simple one because it is a problem of over-supply.

I am surprised that the world does not eat all the lobster that we produce and that the demand does not outrun the supply. But we have to make sure that they understand.