

Oral Questions

Local DFO officials were telling processors in the days immediately prior to March 10 that export permits would not be issued. They knew we had adequate freezer capacity.

Will the minister explain to the House what role his department played in the discussions, whether or not he was consulted by the Department of External Affairs and, if so, what recommendations were made by his ministry?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, indeed we were consulted by the Department of External Affairs on this issue. We were made aware that there was a need to allow for the export of roe herring to the United States because of the freezing capacity.

• (1450)

This is the condition. The condition of all export licences granted is that the fish be brought back to Canada for processing and we have the undertaking of the processors, the exporters, in that regard.

I do not see where the member sees a problem with this.

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, those assurances from the processing companies with 80 cents will get you a cup of coffee in the cafeteria. Right now employees of the B.C. Packers plant in Victoria are receiving their lay-off notices, and that freezer plant could have handled a lot of the pounds that are being shipped.

Regulations were issued late on Friday evening; 107 permits were issued early Saturday morning to ship 3,400 tonnes, 7.5 million pounds or 11 per cent of our total expected catch for 1990.

The trucks are rolling. The fish are leaving. The jobs are reappearing in Washington State.

The previous Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the former Minister for International Trade assured us that no jobs historically held in the B.C. fish processing industry would be lost. What assurances will the present minister give to the B.C. shore workers that he will make sure B.C. fish processing jobs will be secured for Canadians?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the position is quite clear. In order

to handle the herring it has to go through an individual quick freezing method, and there is a limited capacity in B.C. to freeze herring.

There is a TAC of about 30,000 tonnes of herring which may be caught very quickly. There is a limited number of export permits being issued on the condition that the herring will be shipped to the U.S. for freezing only and returned to Canada for processing. Each time an export under a valid permit is made it has to be reported to External Affairs. When the fish is returned to Canada the reimportation must be reported to External Affairs and verified with documentation. This is to ensure that roe herring caught will not lie on a dock and rot because the freezing capacity is not there.

Finally, the B.C. Packers plant that is being closed is being closed because of high costs, a shorter trolling season and the shifting of the fishery to the north. That is the reason for the closure, not the specious and false reasons just given by the hon. gentleman opposite.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

Yesterday the government revealed its proposal for Article XI negotiations at the GATT in the multilateral trade negotiations this year. It is a rather vague document, although we are glad to see the government finally reveal its position with regard to Article XI and the support it will provide to dairy farmers of Canada.

Is the minister willing to make a commitment here this afternoon that the government will not allow imports larger than those recommended by dairy farmers of Canada and the almost 40,000 families who depend on those import controls to have a viable industry?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, on occasion after occasion we have given our commitments to the farmers of Canada who were interested in this issue and to other interested people that we are going to be fighting, as we did with the presentation we made yesterday, for a clear and effective Article XI(2)(1)(c), and that is just what we are doing.

We are glad to see the support that we are getting from dairy farmers. Richard Doyle of the Dairy Farmers of Canada said: 'It is the first detailed proposal on