

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman opposite takes great pride in citing negative news. Perhaps he might be interested in some good news. Today the *Financial Post* reported that store sales show signs of life. Department store sales bring hope to sector. Housing sales are up in January. I think those are all good indicators.

We know very well that we are going through difficult times. It is very difficult in pulling out of the recession, but the fundamentals are right. I think Canada is well poised to take advantage of the encouraging signs that are clearly on the horizon.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, talking about somebody needing a bit of life, it is this government which should at this time do the right thing for Canadians.

• (1420)

I would like to ask another question of the Deputy Prime Minister or perhaps the Minister for International Trade.

The statement made by the Prime Minister in Peterborough talks about the NDP or the unemployed. It might be the same thing after the next election. I want to know if the Prime Minister—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien: I am sorry, I wanted to be nice. I want to ask the minister if the statement made by the Prime Minister is true, and I hope it needs no correction, that the government has no intention of presenting a tariff list at the GATT by the end of this month concerning the products that should be excluded under the GATT list asked for by Mr. Dunkel.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I hate to answer this question and get in between in this lover's quarrel over here, but let me respond.

The Prime Minister and a number of ministers met earlier today with farm leaders and talked about the GATT negotiations, in particular their response to the Dunkel text and the need to put forward tariff positions for March 1.

We, as my hon. friend is very well aware, do not accept the Dunkel text as it relates to the supply managed product and our position, as put forward on March 1, will reflect that position. In other words, we will not put forward any tariffication numbers or anything such as is requested by the GATT Dunkel text.

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FISHERIES

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am happy that there will be no list, but the problem remains the same in Canada. Because of the uncertainty created by this government, we see farmers being driven off the land everywhere in Canada. Now we see fishermen being driven off the sea.

Yesterday, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans got up in the House and spoke a lot of words. What has been the reaction in Atlantic Canada? It is despair for 2,000 fishermen who will lose their jobs because of the mismanagement of this government.

I ask the Minister of Finance if his government will do something to preserve the dignity of these hard workers of the sea.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, since there has been no decision made as yet with reference to the question of the total allowable catch of northern cod for this year or exactly what action will be taken in connection with the new advice from the CASSAC committee, no one can seriously estimate what the effect might be of any change to it until a change is made.

There will have to be changes and there will be an effect, but the statement that 2,000 fishermen will be out of work is very inaccurate. There will doubtless be some plant workers out of work and some trawlermen will certainly be affected, but I think the 2,000 fishermen figure is far too great an estimate.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, foreign overfishing is a matter of political will and would have stopped long ago if the Prime Minister had chosen to take it on.

The Minister of Fisheries' sin is not that he does not understand or has not spoken out on the issue, albeit belatedly. His sin is his continuing presence in a cabinet which by failing to act is ruthlessly trampling on the