

Oral Questions

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

In addition to the 1,000 people in St. Anthony who demonstrated on Tuesday, just a few hours ago there was a demonstration in Clarenville in my riding representing two of the 57 plants, about 9,000 people involved in the fishing industry and fish plant operators.

These people are very worried. They do not have unemployment insurance or their unemployment insurance has run out. They have no fish and they have no idea what the short-term, long-term or interim plans are.

These people are crying out. They are asking for help. In view of the crisis situation, could the minister share with this House some indication of what his action plan is for the compensation for these people?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, it is too bad for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that it takes a demonstration to wake up the member.

On March 23, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and I announced a task force to deal with that very problem. The member talks about the long-term problem of those fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador. I do not think that by inviting people to hold demonstrations it will address the problem. We have to find a way to solve the long-term problems of the fishery in all of Atlantic Canada and we have a task force doing that.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and I have been quite clear. We are committed to help those people. We are in the process of analysing and trying to find out how we can best help them. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have our commitment that we will do that.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, this government including that minister, is responsible for mismanaging the fishery for the last eight years. I do not need lessons from him.

He tells me to wake up. I have made 25 interventions in the last three months. I think I have been awake for a hell of a long time.

This House is going to shut down on Tuesday. The Atlantic fishermen are afraid they are going to be forgotten. The Prime Minister stood in this House and gave a commitment to these people two days ago. For those people, the circumstances they are in, a day is like a year.

I ask the minister one more time and I do not want any smart remarks.

I want him to tell me that the Prime Minister has made a commitment. Will he take this commitment and turn the promise of the Prime Minister into reality and do it now?

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Madam Speaker, I want to assure members opposite that we on this side do recognize the serious problem that is evolving on the east coast.

The member need only to look back to 1990 and 1991 to what this government did to be assured that there will be a program in place should we have to announce a moratorium.

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AIRPORTS

Mr. David Bjornson (Selkirk—Red River): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a question for the Minister of Transport.

As the minister knows, a significant part of the air transport side of his department is to check and maintain navigational aids at airports across Canada.

It has been brought to my attention that the private sector can provide a more economical and more technologically advanced system to check and maintain these navigational aids.

I would like to ask the minister if he is considering improving the method of checking these devices and at the same time saving the taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that Transport Canada uses the most advanced technology in the testing and calibrating of navigational aids and that our main concern is the safety of the aviation industry.

At the same time, we are examining proposals that have been made to us to maintain the safety at a lower cost and of course we are interested in it.