

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 18, 1989

[*Editor's Note: Continuation of proceedings from Volume A.*]

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

[*English*]

MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S. O. 52

ATLANTIC FISHERY

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has granted leave to the hon. member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso to move the adjournment of the House pursuant to Standing Order 52 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, the situation in the Atlantic fishery.

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso) moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that an arrangement has been entered into among all three parties in which it is the disposition of the House to hear the right hon. Leader of the Opposition, but on the understanding that the hon. member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso will be heard later. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Cape Breton Highlands—Canso for moving the motion which we are debating before Your Honour tonight.

This young member has shown more compassion and more concern for Atlantic Canada in one year than the federal Conservative government has shown in the last five.

What we are debating here this evening is not just another crisis. It is not just another local problem. What

we are debating here this evening is the collapse of the entire Atlantic fishery. I want the people from other parts of Canada who may be watching this debate this evening or following Parliament to understand the depth of what we are saying here.

For many Canadians, Atlantic Canada seems remote. Put yourself in a situation where the entire steel industry of Sault Ste. Marie or Hamilton were to be closed down, everybody thrown out of work. Imagine what the reaction would be in the province of Ontario, particularly when the Prime Minister of Canada told them they never had it so good. It is as though the financial district, Montreal or Toronto, was closed down and then the prime Minister were to tell the workers, clerks, office people, they have never had it so good. This is what this Prime Minister has said to the people of Atlantic Canada.

It is more than a crisis. It is a calamity. It is a calamity which is driving people out of the Atlantic provinces, a calamity which is wiping out whole towns and villages, a calamity which is destroying a way of life. What has this government done? Let's look at the record of the Prime Minister who in 1988 said during the last federal election in Saint John, New Brunswick on October 13, 1988:

I feel something special for Atlantic Canada and its needs.

If that is something special, the people of Canada want something different and they want something different fast. What are we seeing? We have seen the Marine Ecology Laboratory at the Bedford Institute disbanded, repeated cuts in the fisheries staff, mismanagement of the fish stocks, slashed unemployment insurance payments to Atlantic Canadians.

The federal government has withdrawn the government's contribution to the unemployment insurance fund, reduced commitments to post-secondary education and health care. The provinces of the Atlantic are particularly vulnerable. It failed to renew regional development agreements, closed Armed Forces bases in Atlantic Canada and announced a new national sales tax which in most crippling to Atlantic Canada, because the