

Oral Questions

The Globe and Mail says: "Fish stocks needs studies, Spain says."

No wonder the hon. gentleman is confused. What in fact happened was that the President of Spain agreed that conservation must be the central principle governing fishing in the northwest Atlantic. They would like to have joint scientific studies and co-operation so that they can have confidence in our figures just as we have confidence in them.

We are making solid progress with the Commissioner of Fisheries of the European Community. We are undertaking some joint studies and, before the year is out, we hope to see substantial progress.

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of International Trade.

We could make substantial progress if the government would do something about what is in its own hands. Why is it that the Government of Canada refuses to act unilaterally to extend Canadian jurisdiction over the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, as has been recommended in every credible study that has come before it? Why does it refuse to do that?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, previous governments of Canada never acted unilaterally in these matters.

Previous governments never acted unilaterally when the fish stocks of the northwest Atlantic disappeared. They worked in international circles and in the UN for a number of years before finally, after 10 or 12 years, the Law of the Sea Convention was agreed upon.

We cannot breach international law by unilaterally extending the 200-mile limit, which no other country of the world will observe.

The hon. gentleman may not mind making a fool of himself, but we do not want to join him in that position.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Communications.

UNITEL announced today that it is going to apply to compete with the phone companies in the long distance

telephone system. If this bid is successful, it will mean higher phone rates for 90 per cent of Canadians. Traditionally, long distance in this country has subsidized local rates.

Given that government policy has consistently favoured the business agenda in this area as in other areas, will the minister give a commitment to ordinary Canadians that for once he will stick up for the average consumer and ordinary Canadian against these big interests?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. member's question because he himself said in the preamble that a telecommunications company has applied to the CRTC for a hearing. He would have me intervene instead of the CRTC. I think that would be breaking the laws passed by this House.

An application was made to the CRTC; the CRTC will hear proposals and counter-proposals and render a decision in due course, without any partisan demagoguery such as we just heard. Canadians will then know the position of the CRTC, which is the official agency that is independent of the government in these matters, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, pardon me if I am a little suspicious of the government.

Ted Rogers, one of the principals behind UNITEL, gave more money to Conservative cabinet ministers in the last election than I could possibly count.

The country is moving toward one unitary fibre optic network which will be to the 21st century what railways were to the 19th century. I want a commitment from this government that it will not only make telephones but fibre optics and communications in this country available and affordable to average Canadians, not just to its friends in big business.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, with all his eloquence, the hon. member could go to the CRTC and express his point of view.