

*Adjournment Debate*

## ATLANTIC FISHERMEN

**Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset before I launch into my adjournment debate, I want to say that I for one am very pleased to be back in this House to take control of the situation in the country and to bring some order to the very poor economic state that exists.

I was somewhat disappointed in the two bills that were debated here today. One, if passed, would result in university students being denied the right to the interest on their loans being forgiven for the first six months of their work.

The other one involves the Patent Act, the one we were just discussing. It will increase the cost of prescription drugs somewhere beyond 11 per cent a year. I am not sure that is what Canadians had in mind when they knew the House was coming back.

The point I want to make concerns a question I asked in September of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. It pertained to the discrepancies in the Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery Program, known in Newfoundland now as NCARP. I see the hon. parliamentary secretary is here so I will refer to it as NCARP.

In my question to the minister of fisheries I used the example that three months after the announcement of the program the six lines in my office received numerous calls. In a period of six days Newfoundland Telephone recorded over 10,000 calls.

The point I was making, in using that statistic, was that a lot of people were not sure where they stood, for example truckers, fish handlers, small plant operators and even people involved in small industries that used welding systems and small engineering for their fishing boats which now of course are not operating. They were all concerned about where they stood.

As a follow-up today I want to use an example of 22 crab plant workers in the town of Bonavista. I should explain that the crab plant and the fish processing plant are one and the same. They are essentially situated in the same plant in Bonavista owned by Fishery Products International. These people lost their jobs earlier in the summer and they have been trying to get compensation. They have been trying through other means and I became involved within the last three weeks.

I am using them as an example. They applied through NCARP for compensation and were told they could not get compensation because they worked in a crab plant. The point here is that they were displaced by the fish processing plant workers who had the seniority to take their jobs, which normally would not have happened.

The point I made in a letter to the minister of fisheries and the point I am making this evening is that they did not have enough weeks to qualify. They did not have enough work because their crab plant processing operation was taken over by the fish plant operators who in turn were displaced because there was no northern cod.

This is a good case for those ladies who are sitting in the town hall this evening in Bonavista and will continue to sit until some dispensation is given to them. They feel they have been displaced by the northern cod moratorium. They believe that they, among the other examples I quoted this evening, should qualify for NCARP, and if they do not emergency jobs should be created for them.

**Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. member opposite I know he has brought this matter before the House on many occasions. He referred to his question of September 6.

I might add that the NCARP is an exceptional response to a very difficult problem and many people are being helped under this program. I can say from the government side of the House that we are doing our best to ensure that others in need of help but not qualified under the program will be helped by other government programs and that is being actively pursued right now.

As of the last benefit period ending on November 7, there were approximately 24,400 individuals eligible under NCARP. This included 9,900 fishermen, 13,600 plant workers and 900 trawlermen. A total of 142 plants have been designated under the program and to date the benefits paid have reached \$84.9 million.

Under the terms and conditions of the program approved by Treasury Board, individuals other than fishermen and plant workers affected by the northern cod moratorium are ineligible for assistance under NCARP. However provisions have been made within