

Oral Questions

on the most effective use of our peacekeeping force. Then we, as a government, take a political decision.

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FISHERIES

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, fishers, shore workers, and tenders will suffer hardship this winter because of the lack of fishing and work opportunities. The United Fishers and Allied Workers Union has pleaded for the reinstatement of the variable entrance program so these workers could collect unemployment insurance.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has written to me and said he and the Minister of Employment and Immigration decided not to top up UI for the west coast fishers.

I would like to ask the minister if he could tell this House how he expects these workers to survive this winter.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I answered this question in the House a week or 10 days ago. The emergency response program is used to respond to catch failures. There have not been, thank heaven, any catch failures on the west coast of Canada this year. Therefore it is not appropriate to bring in the emergency response program.

Unfortunately you have to work for 17 weeks to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits in the lower mainland of British Columbia. It is unfortunate in one sense, but it shows that there is a lower rate of unemployment in that area than in most other areas. That is the problem.

I would remind the hon. member that there was a strike during the summer which had some effect on the situation, as well with respect to time spent in fish processing.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, it is important for this minister to understand that when fish fail to appear and those depending upon the availability of those fish can no longer work, that is catch failure.

I would like to know why three years ago we had the variable entrance program for the same industry, that I guess did not have a catch failure then either.

I would like to ask the minister this. As a result of the Pearce-Larkin report yesterday, which clearly spelled out government mismanagement of the west coast fishery, the government still refuses to assist those workers who are victims of that incompetence. Does the minister not believe he has an obligation to those workers displaced by that mismanagement and will he urge the minister of employment to put in a variable entrance program for those workers?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Madam Speaker, if the hon. member could tell where the fishery failure was in British Columbia this year, I would appreciate knowing it. As a matter of fact, at this low year in the salmon cycle, there was the best salmon fishery, the second highest number of salmon return in 80 years at this particular period of the four-year cycle. There has been no fishery failure in British Columbia.

Therefore, it is not appropriate to apply this particular program because the circumstances for its application are not there.

Ms. Langan: People have no jobs.

Mr. Crosbie: Interjections from the hon. member will not change that situation. The fish came back. The fish were there.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister. It relates to other questions of mismanagement in his department.

I have obtained a May 1991 memo from legal counsel in the minister's department from the west coast commenting on an RCMP investigation into his department regarding the controversial Kemano project in northern B.C. The memo raises questions about the department, the RCMP inquiry, its purpose and the manner in which it began.

• (1430)

Will the minister tell the House the nature of the RCMP investigation on the Alcan project in his department? When will Parliament have a report on this matter and when will he clean up the mess in his department?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, these are ferocious questions the hon. member is asking.