

Oral Questions

Mr. Crouse: Madam Speaker, it was my understanding that when the 200-mile limit was established, it was to be of benefit to the Canadian fishing industry. This, of course, is what has happened. When the 200-mile exclusive economic zone was established, quotas to other nations fishing within our zone were to be allocated only on fish surplus to our needs. In view of the fact that the new proposals can only be harmful to Canadians who wish to work not nine months a year but 12 months a year, has the minister decreased the quotas in 1981 for foreign fishermen operating within our 200-mile zone? If so, by how many tonnes and on what species?

Mr. LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, the quota that is of interest to Canadians and which was allocated in 1980 to foreign nations was in the order of 25,000 tonnes. The fishing plan for 1981 does not yet dispose of this quota. There are very important negotiations under way or which have just been concluded with the Common Market. I have not yet been briefed as to the conclusions of those discussions. It may be that Canada will want some part of that 25,000 tonnes as negotiating currency for access to the European Common Market. I think it is wise to keep this opening available to us.

I might say to the hon. member that the fishing fleet he defends, and which I suspect he has become the voice of, has enjoyed a very substantial increase in its rate of catch since the declaration of the 200-mile limit. That has not been the case for at least three provinces, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, which inside the Gulf of St. Lawrence have not seen a substantial increase at all. It is to these fisheries that the large trawlers which the hon. member defends want to have access. I must tell him that the fish have to be shared, and those who had more cannot always expect to have an unlimited amount.

* * *

EXTERNAL AID

ITALIAN EARTHQUAKE—TRANSMISSION OF FUNDS TO VICTIMS

Mr. Al MacBain (Niagara Falls): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. There have been reports that financial assistance from the Canadian-Italian community to help Italy's earthquake victims is still in Canada. Can the Canadian government facilitate the sending of these moneys to either the Italian government or to international agencies?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I presume the funds to which my hon. friend refers are those collected by the Italian community in Canada. What they decide to do with those funds in the first instance is obviously their own concern. My understanding is that those funds were collected primarily for reconstruction. I suppose they may be used for emergency rehabilitation and relief, if necessary. I can quite understand why they would not have acted at the moment when the full extent of the problem is not known.

With respect to our government assistance, we are now committed to \$300,000 in emergency relief and another \$1.5 million in longer-term rehabilitation. I understand my colleague the Minister of National Defence, is also making clothing and shelter materials available from our base at Lahr.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

REFUGEE PROGRAM FOR ITALIAN EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In view of the deep concern felt by all Canadians for the suffering still being endured by the people of Italy, will the government consider a special refugee program so that homeless persons in Italy who have no relatives in Canada to sponsor them, or homeless persons who have relatives who cannot afford to sponsor them, might be permitted to come to this country as refugees rather than having to go through all of the immigration red tape?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1500)

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, as I indicated in the House last week, there is already a provision whereby Italians from the affected earthquake area could immediately come to Canada under the visa regulations of the act, and we have instructed our officials to give them total access at the port of entry and waive some of the normal requirements that a person would normally have to meet. Under those circumstances they would not be landed immediately but would be able to get relief here in Canada, and we would be prepared even under extreme emergency circumstances to provide ministerial permits to allow them to take up residence.

Whether they can be incorporated under the refugee category of the act is something that my colleague the Minister of State for Multiculturalism and I and the Secretary of State for External Affairs will want to have discussed with the Italian government beforehand, because it really is, in part, a decision that they would have to make. Being a very independent country, we would first want to make sure that they are in agreement with that kind of action.

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, may I ask the minister a supplementary question? In dealing with this matter, will the government also consider the possibility of providing transportation costs and care for a year, as Canada so generously did for the boat people?

Mr. Axworthy: Madam Speaker, as I indicated last week, the provisions of the transportation loan fund will be available to people coming from the earthquake areas of Italy; they will have exactly the same provisions available to them. It is also my understanding, again from talking to my colleague and having met with representatives of several Italian organiza-