

Oral Questions

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, why is the minister so tender on this issue? Why is he dragging in all those red herrings? He is the one who has those fishermen out there twisting in the wind. What has he done? For example, has he today seen to it that the ambassadors in Brussels, Lisbon and Madrid are meeting with their opposite numbers to reinforce the urgency of this situation? Instead of bafflegab, why does he not tell us what he is doing for those fishermen?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to see the renewed interest in this question by the hon. gentleman. I appeared before the standing committee on fisheries a week ago last Thursday. There was not a Liberal member for Newfoundland who turned up, so I am delighted.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. minister knows that it is improper to announce that to the House.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, the minister is improper. He says he has been on to this issue since January 1989. The foreign fishing had been going on for four years before he opened his mouth on the issue. Where was he during all those committee meetings for those four years?

He talks about a resolution in June down in Rio somewhere. What will this resolution do? If the resolution does not succeed in getting the international community to come to its senses on this one, would the minister now give notice that he intends as a government to take unilateral action to save those stocks while there is some left to save: take the action, go out there and take over management of the nose and tail of the Banks? Will he answer that question?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, this government has taken unilateral action after unilateral action in this matter and will continue to take unilateral action.

Here is a unilateral action: this is the resolution we have before the United Nations. It was conceived at St. John's, Newfoundland two years ago when the hon. gentleman was not thinking much about this issue. It was not popularized so much. This gives the principles that we say should apply to straddling stocks so that the

coastal state has management rights over the straddling stocks.

If this is accepted by the international community, and any action can only be effective if it is accepted by the international community, this problem will be resolved. We cannot answer whether or not it will be accepted, but the Prime Minister himself is leading our delegation to Rio to make sure that it gets full attention at Rio.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: The hon. gentlemen have been pleading that the Prime Minister get personally involved, and I can assure them he is personally involved.

* * *

[Translation]

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister.

During the Canada-U.S. free trade talks, Canadians were very concerned about a plan to send great quantities of fresh water to the United States.

The current draft agreement, however, includes pipelines which could carry water to the United States and Mexico. Obviously, Canadians do not want to pump great quantities of fresh water from Canada.

Is it the government's policy to make it easier to send great quantities of fresh water from Canada to the United States and Mexico?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): No, Mr. Speaker. My hon. friend is very much aware of the water policy of the Government of Canada which does not allow that. It does allow for the export of water in containers, water in bottles and that sort of thing, but not diversions of water or the sale of water in great quantities, to use her words.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, if this is the case, it is going to be hard getting all those little bottles of water into those pipelines which are non-energy pipelines which are proposed in the draft text we have seen of the NAFTA trade deal.