

Government Orders

sponse during Question Period earlier today essentially acknowledged this matter as well.

I want to again use the Newfoundland example, although I am sure that colleagues from other provinces could use ones with which they are familiar. Part of my riding on the southwest coast includes a number of communities that depend exclusively on what we call the fixed gear fishery, or the hook and line fishery. I am thinking of communities such as Grand Bruit, La Poile, Petites, Rose Blanche, Isle aux Morts, Burnt Islands, Fox Roost, Margaree, Port aux Basques, and Codroy.

Mr. Edwards: Channel?

Mr. Simmons: The member for Edmonton Southwest is right. There used to be a—

Mr. DeBlois: How do you explain only 200 people?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I would hope that hon. members would allow the member to finish his speech. The hon. member for Burin—St. George's has the floor.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Montmorency—Orléans for his question. It does not relate to fish. I could be unkind and suggest that he does not want me to talk about fish, but I do not think that was the burden of his question. The question was, how do I explain the number of people who showed up on the Hill for the GST protest on the weekend?

Well, I was not among them, not because I am for the GST, but I happened to be in my riding. I am sure that would apply to a number of other people. However, I am sure he is aware that this past weekend we celebrated one of the most marvellous institutions that we have in this country, called Mother's Day. He will understand that the organizers made a mistake on the weekend, they set up an absolutely impossible and terrible choice, asking the people to choose between their mothers and the future of their country. It is a very hard choice. Many people who were out kissing mom, sending her notes, or taking her to dinner were nevertheless realizing that next year or the year after when they take her out, it is going to be even more expensive because they are going to have a 7 per cent goods and services tax.

I was talking about the fisheries aid package. The fishermen in those communities who use the fixed gear equipment were not helped at all. There was not one red cent for them. That is not a new statement. The minister

is aware of that, and the Minister for International Trade acknowledged as much today.

If I heard the minister of trade's answer correctly, I understand that at the end of the season, the government will look at the situation and see what kinds of incomes those people have had. I have news for the minister of trade. It is the end of the season. He is from Newfoundland and he should know that the so-called winter fishery on that coast runs from the first of January to the end of March. Also he should know that it is well beyond the end of March and that I have been giving him the figures both by letter and in this House. I will give them one more time. I will pick one of the communities that I mentioned a few moments ago, the community of Rose Blanche. In that community, there are 147 licensed inshore fishermen. Three years ago, during the winter fishery, the period January 1 to March 31, those 147 fishermen landed four million pounds of fish. In the same period this year, those 147 fishermen, given one or two who may have died or retired, landed not four million pounds as they did three years ago, but fewer than 200 pounds; they landed no fish at all. The fish just are not there. The season is over.

• (1550)

If the Minister for International Trade is saying today that they are going to wait until the end of the season, I say to him that they have already waited a month or so too long, because the season ended at the end of March. I will be following up with him as a result of his answer to my colleague from Beauséjour earlier today on that particular issue.

If I may return to the fisheries aid package, there are two points I want to make. The first one I have just dealt with. A whole group of people, many thousands of fish plant workers as well as fishermen are affected because of the domino effect. If the landings are down from four million pounds to nothing in a particular community, then there are no fish to be cut and no work in the plant for those several hundred workers of that plant and also for the many other plants along that coast.

Literally thousands of inshore fishermen and thousands of inshore fish plant workers really do not know today, as we sit here, where the next dollar is coming from. We are not talking about getting enough income to get UI stamps to qualify for unemployment insurance. We are talking about enough income to put bread on the table today. They are not reaping enough from their fishing efforts to pay for gasoline and the expenses of the