

Oral Questions

the situation of the textile and clothing industry in Quebec and in Canada, which industry is now threatened by uncontrolled imports, and on what the government intends to do to protect the workers in that industry.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House has heard the motion of the hon. member. Under Standing Order 43, the motion requires unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: As there is not unanimous consent, the motion cannot be put.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF STATEMENT OF FISHERIES MINISTER CONCERNING 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It relates to the speech made at the Law of the Sea Conference by the Minister of State (Fisheries). Does the contingency plan indicated by the minister represent the policy of this government? In general terms, what is this contingency plan? Does it relate to unilateral control of the fisheries extending out 200 miles or over the whole continental shelf?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of State (Fisheries) spoke, he of course spoke on behalf of the Canadian government. He went there as a delegate of Canada for this purpose. I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing the text of what he said. Hence, I do not think it would be appropriate to comment on the particular point raised by the Leader of the Opposition at the present time.

Mr. Stanfield: Does the Acting Prime Minister not find it a little extraordinary for him to give the assurance that the Minister of State (Fisheries) was stating government policy but he, the Acting Prime Minister, does not know what the policy was?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, we have confidence in our ministers to state government policy. All I was saying to the Leader of the Opposition was that I have not yet seen the text of the minister's speech and, therefore, I think it inappropriate to comment on it.

Mr. Stanfield: Will the Acting Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs state that it is the policy of the government of Canada to exercise unilateral control of our fisheries over the continental shelf in the

[Mr. Fortin.]

absence of an international agreement? Is this the policy? If so, in general terms how does the government propose to implement it?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the policy of the government on this point has been stated a number of times, namely that one of the policy options open to the government of Canada is unilateral action. However, in light of the continuing progress being made at the Law of the Sea Conference, we have not reached any conclusion as to the adoption of that particular option. It certainly would not be the intention of the government to consider any such option until the full results of the conference have been assessed by the government.

LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OUTLINING GOVERNMENT PLANS IF CONFERENCE FAILS

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that several ministers have stated on a number of occasions that Canada would take unilateral action, will the Secretary of State for External Affairs make a statement on motions outlining the plan they will follow in the event the Law of the Sea Conference fails?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will consider the suggestion made by the hon. member. It may be possible to make a statement at some time following the conclusion of the conference, which is not very far distant.

Mr. Marshall: Should agreement at the Law of the Sea Conference not be reached, will bilateral discussions be held with any of those nations which agree to a 200-mile limit. If agreement is reached, would the government then take action along with the nations that want to extend the limit to 200 miles?

Mr. MacEachen: Any such decision would certainly be premature at this point. We certainly wish to wait to see the results of this conference; my information is that real progress has been made on each of the major policy issues in which Canada has a real interest. In my opinion it would be unwise to prejudge the results at this point.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Why does the Minister of the Environment prejudge them, then?

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

ALLEGED INCREASE IN WAGE DISPARITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Since this is International Women's Year, and taking into account the fact that today is May Day, a day which has important symbolic significance for those who believe in the notion of equality, may I ask the minister what steps he and his department are taking to reverse the trend which was revealed in the most recent report of the women's bureau