

Oral Questions

most important of all, improved and increased scientific effort on northern cod.

Is the government prepared to act immediately, not next fall or next year, but immediately on these recommendations of the Harris report?

• (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was on Friday and over the weekend and is today and will be tomorrow, when I will be accompanying him, consulting with members of the industry, with those involved in the fisheries unions that represent the workers, and with provincial governments and advising them of what steps we now propose to take. Within the next few days he will be announcing the concrete steps the government is to take in connection with the Harris report recommendations.

I think this will be action that any reasonable member of this House will support and will realize should go a long way in meeting this problem. These actions will certainly include greatly expanded acquisition of facilities, efforts and expenditures with reference to scientific research off the east coast of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): Mr. Speaker, we are still hearing lots of words—big words with little meaning. We are told that consultation is still going on but nevertheless, the government has long known about a crisis in the Atlantic, even if the Prime Minister denied it.

All those concerned with the fishery agree that the government must act right away, that it must do something!

Mr. Masse: Lying words!

Mr. Robichaud: So why does the minister hesitate to tell us this very day what they are prepared to do? Why are they reluctant to mention the billion-dollar aid program the fishermen were promised? Where is this program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to observe the inconsistent ways in which the hon. gentleman approaches the problem.

The Harris report was made public last Friday. Today is Monday. If the government acted now without any consultation whatsoever with provincial premiers, fisheries ministers, the industry and the unions, the opposition would be in a state of outrage and high dudgeon, and of course the media would report that fact.

We are taking a couple of days to advise all these groups of the actions that we have decided to take and what our program is to be. There will be a public announcement within a few days. We are just observing proper courtesies in giving people that we are dealing with in the four Atlantic provinces a chance to give us their reaction to what we propose to do. At that time the announcement will be made.

If we did not do that, the hon. gentleman would be up claiming that we were not consulting with the provinces.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Minister for International Trade.

In response to the crisis in the Atlantic fishery, we have seen this government just refuse to put up any new money to save these communities. We have heard a lot about the \$130 million, but we all know that was money which was previously allocated to the Atlantic region.

We have seen too, just today, that the government will not reduce the TAC to save the fishery resource. We have seen that it does not want to take unilateral action to take jurisdiction over the nose and tail of the Grand Bank. We wonder what the government is going to do with the Harris report.

Let me ask the minister about another recommendation from the Harris report and other reports which suggest that communities should share the pain of the Atlantic and that we do this by community quotas for the fishery.

National Sea has closed its operations in Canso and is attempting to move its trawlers elsewhere. Is the minister prepared to reconsider the refusal to examine com-