

*Oral Questions*

these homes, I may remind the hon. member that the legislation governed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation does not provide for such measures. It would be necessary to amend the act, and I am not so sure that this kind of loan would be preferable to the \$5,000 direct, non-taxable grant available to UFFI victims who are homeowners.

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[English]

**LABOUR CONDITIONS**

## LAY-OFFS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA FISH PLANTS

**Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Two hundred and fifty shore workers in Prince Rupert are going to join 400 other colleagues from Port Edward and 200 colleagues from Oakland Fisheries in Victoria on the bread lines as a result of corporate decisions to shut down fish plants. These are among the same corporations that have been at the public trough for a number of years, namely, George Weston Limited, Merubeni, and H.B. Nickerson and Sons Limited.

In view of the minister's attempts to prop up the unemployment insurance contributions from fishermen again, would he go to British Columbia with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, meet with fishermen in Prince Rupert, meet with the council in Prince Rupert, the people who are going to suffer a tremendous loss of income, and see if we cannot bring some sense to the employment situation in Canada by keeping plants open and workers working, rather than paying unemployment insurance premiums to the workers of British Columbia?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, I am not exactly sure of the purpose of the hon. member's question. I do sympathize with the situation which the fishworkers on the island are facing. I would remind the hon. member that I was on Vancouver Island just over a month ago at which time I met with a number of woodworkers there. We will be in British Columbia with the western affairs committee on April 23 and I will be very happy to take representations at that time.

Might I say to the hon. member that the whole point of the unemployment insurance program is to provide income security for workers who are laid off their jobs during downturns in the economy. That is the purpose of the program and that is how it is being used. I do not think it serves any purpose to criticize the program when in fact we do provide that basic support and foundation for workers who are facing temporary loss of income.

● (1440)

## CRITERIA GOVERNING GRANTS MADE TO PROCESSORS

**Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni):** Madam Speaker, my supplementary is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce who has been responsible for many of the DREE grants to fish processing plants, particularly in Atlantic Canada, as well as to B.C. Packers and Weston's corporation. Workers do not want to collect unemployment; they want to work. Therefore, will the minister reconsider the criteria under

which grants are made to processors in Canada so that the Canadian government has some commitment from those processing plants to stay open and keep workers working? If not, will he consider the option of taking some equity in processing plants which the government is so generously funding?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Madam Speaker, I will be happy to examine my hon. friend's suggestions. Obviously we want the maximum benefit for workers, their communities, and our country from programs like DREE, and his suggestion with respect to commitments is certainly something I would be happy to examine.

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**ENERGY**

## NEGOTIATIONS WITH NEWFOUNDLAND ON OFFSHORE RESOURCES

**Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Madam Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. Referring to the offshore dispute with Newfoundland the Prime Minister said on May 5, 1981:

We consistently maintain that ownership is not the important issue and that reaching a negotiated agreement on shared management is the vitally important issue . . .

That was the Prime Minister's position last May. Is he now prepared to say to the government and people of Newfoundland that, consistent with his statement last year, his government is prepared to set aside the question of ownership and sit down and negotiate with Newfoundland on the basis of the very reasonable compromise proposal which was accepted by 60 per cent of the population of Newfoundland who voted yesterday?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I must remind the hon. member of something I told him in this House a couple of months ago. My answer is still the same, that the position I expressed in 1981 I had been expressing all through the 1970s. We began sitting down with the Atlantic provinces as early as 1969 or 1970, if my memory is correct, and we adhered to the proposal that we set aside the question of ownership and try to negotiate an agreement, as we have been able to do with the government of Nova Scotia, and as we had been able to do in 1978 or 1979 with the governments of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. The only government which has never wanted or been able to reach an agreement acceptable to other provinces is the province of Newfoundland.

I have not been pressing for the settlement of the question of ownership; I have been pressing for a negotiated political settlement. The government of Newfoundland has been saying no for all those years, and it is that government which first brought a reference to the courts to settle the question of ownership. I find it rather strange that they now say we should