

*Oral Questions*

of the Sea or other agreements all over the world. If that were not the case we would not have foreign fishing fleets at all. The hon. gentleman is completely wet as usual.

**Mr. Baker:** Mr. Speaker, did you ever think we would see the day when our fish companies would be going to the Soviet Union, as they did two weeks ago, hat in hand, asking the Soviet Union, as the last resort, for fish to be brought to Canadian fish plants so that we could keep our fish plants open.

I want to ask the Government of Canada, which is a 20 per cent shareholder of National Sea Products Limited, to confirm that neither the Government of Canada nor the governments of Nova Scotia or Newfoundland can lift a finger and give any assistance at all to these fish companies about to fold, all because of the free trade agreement?

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Crosbie:** Mr. Speaker, a week ago—

**Mr. Duhamel:** You think it's funny, do you?

**Mr. Crosbie:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. gentleman, does he want to bawl out a bit louder or am I allowed to answer?

A week ago the hon. member blamed the decision by Abitibi Price to shut down a 63-year old paper machine at Grand Falls on the free trade agreement. Today he is blaming these other results on the free trade agreement. He has got free trade agreement—itis.

The hon. member mentioned *glasnost*. If he is not careful he is going to have a "perestroike"!

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso):** How do you follow that, Mr. Speaker?

My question is for the Prime Minister. Last night a news report aired throughout Atlantic Canada predicted imminent plant closings which could mean a loss of as many as 2,500 jobs in fishing communities in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

What steps will the Prime Minister and his government announce today to protect the jobs of those fish processing workers?

• (1200)

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that we have a very

serious situation off the east coast of Canada with reference to the total allowable catches and the situation with the northern cod.

Last February, I think it was, our marine biologists who advise the government stunned us by advising that the total allowable catch for northern cod, which they had recommended could be 295,000 tonnes in 1988, should be reduced to 125,000 tonnes in 1989.

We could not accept that advice because it would have devastated the whole offshore eastern Canada fishing industry, so we set the TAC at 235,000 tonnes and appointed Mr. Leslie Harris and a distinguished group to review this whole situation.

Undoubtedly it appears that the total allowable catch which will be decided upon by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the government by the end of December or early January will have to be reduced again. In light of that, the offshore companies have to make decisions which I think they are going to announce some time in the next short-term future.

When they do that we will announce our response. Our response will be based on helping the people involved who may lose their jobs, the fishermen or trawlermen involved. We will be ready to announce programs to help look after the people involved. It is tragic, but we cannot do anything about the total allowable catch. However we will act to respond to the results.

**Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso):** Mr. Speaker, the residents of these fishing communities have been on the edge for weeks. They know there is a crisis.

Why does the government refuse to take this crisis seriously? Why will the minister not take immediate steps to prevent the closure of these plants?

**Mr. Crosbie:** Mr. Speaker, why does the hon. gentleman not get together with his colleagues? There is a fisheries critic for Nova Scotia in the opposition. There is one for P.E.I., there is one for New Brunswick, and there is one for the fisheries generally. Why don't they get their act together?

Only two days ago the member for South West Nova was up demanding that we transfer to inshore fishermen quotas from the offshore. It is the offshore fishermen and fish plants that are going to be affected which the hon. gentleman is now up protesting about.