

Adjournment Debate

They are not adequate to deal with the fish plant worker and the companies which employ people on draggers who are now obliged to guess at harvesting plans that the minister told companies and fishermen they had to put into place but which they have not received any guidelines about.

The compensation plan is not adequate to deal with those fish plant workers who are reaching 50 years of age and who are facing premature retirement because of the dissipation of the fish stocks as a result of this government's mismanagement of that resource.

What is needed is a comprehensive fish compensation and adjustment package that will combine a number of elements: income replacement for the fishermen and fish plant workers who are facing a loss of income. There are many more elements which if I had more time I would deal with.

Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, a number of questions have been asked by the member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso. Let me reiterate what the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans stated when responding to the hon. member on this very question previously.

The federal government has been responsive in the past and continues to be responsive to the urgent needs of Atlantic Canada. Together with the province of Nova Scotia, the federal government has funded an early retirement program for older plant workers who have been permanently laid off due to plant closure.

The plant workers adjustment program provides income assistance to workers who traditionally have more difficulty finding work, that is those who are between 50 and 64. Similar programs exist with the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration has made funds available on an emergency basis to workers who are unable to secure sufficient weeks of employment to qualify for UI benefits. Clearly, however, long-term solutions are required to achieve a better balance between the resource base and those in the harvesting sector who are dependent on it for their livelihood.

To achieve this balance, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has announced that beginning in 1994 only

professional fishermen with a genuine attachment to the fishery will be eligible for licences. For this year, ground-fish licences that were inactive in 1991 and 1992 will be frozen but may be reissued in future years pending consultation on new licensing criteria. These licensing measures are designed to ensure that professional fishermen who earn their primary income from the fishery are not denied a livelihood.

This spring departmental officials will consult with the provinces and territorial governments, fisheries organizations and the fishing industry to define the criteria for professional status upon which licensing rules will be based beginning in 1994.

For those who leave the fishery there are government programs available through CEIC to assist in the transition to other employment. The Atlantic groundfish industry must be rebuilt. This government is ensuring that this is done in such a way that the needs of those affected are looked after.

REFUGEES

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, you have probably received an awful lot of calls and an awful lot of letters concerning Bill C-105, the former unemployment insurance bill that was debated in this House recently. I am sure you received a lot of those and I did as well.

I received far more calls and far more letters concerning a Somalian refugee claimant who is currently living in Toronto, one Kadinga Guran, the wife of General Mohammed Farrah Aidid.

According to a number of television reports the general is one of the most powerful and one of the most ruthless warlords living in Somalia right now. According to these reports he is, in fact, one of the primary people responsible for the horrible situation which we find in Somalia today. What we hear from these reports is that the general, this warlord, has two wives. One of them is the refugee claimant in Canada who is living in Toronto. Another wife is living in California in the United States.

The Toronto family is made up of the wife and four of the general's children. The California family is made up of another wife and another four of the general's children, one of whom apparently is serving in the United States Marine Corps at the present time in Somalia as an interpreter.