

Oral Questions

colleague from York West and also the parliamentary secretary.

On the weekend, 100 neo-Nazi skinheads gathered to give fascist salutes and scream racial slogans. Later they rioted and charged through the city streets. This is not a joking matter. These events took place in Ottawa and right here on Parliament Hill.

When will the Prime Minister finally take action to combat racism and establish a comprehensive hate-crime strategy?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, we do not condone violence to settle any differences. Canadians are revolted by the hatred that some people are trying to spread. Ottawans are very clearly expressing their displeasure and dissatisfaction with the message.

We established a program some five years ago making racism one of our most important priorities. The hon. member would want to examine what we have been doing over these last five years in terms of heightened awareness and public education.

I want to take a moment and give particular commendation to the city of Ottawa for having reconstituted the coalition for racial harmony. It did this very quickly after some discussion with our officials earlier today. Councillor Mahoney has indicated there will be a very positive and proactive response by this time next week which I am sure all members will be pleased to hear.

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[Translation]

FISHERIES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Fisheries, I will direct my question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration who shares with him the responsibility for the fisheries assistance program in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

• (1455)

On the weekend, I met the fishermen of Chéticamp who out of frustration are occupying the offices of Fisheries and Oceans, as are their fellow workers in Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. For

fishermen in the Gulf of St. Lawrence the fisheries assistance program the government announced two weeks ago is an insult. It is inadequate, ill conceived and five months late and it is not even ready yet. Fish stocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence are in crisis. When will the minister put in place an assistance program that reflects this reality?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I suppose it is indeed difficult for any level of government to correct overnight the situation due to the environmental phenomenon of the near-disappearance of several Atlantic fish species. Of the nearly 30,000 fishermen and plant workers in that industry, 7,200 are affected or covered by this program.

As my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, indicated, many of these programs require consultations with the workers and fishermen to be implemented. Without such consultations it cannot be done. We advanced \$191 million to try to help the people. If we can make improvements we will, but it will be done through discussion and not by occupying offices.

[English]

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Madam Speaker, the fishermen want action, not hand waving. These people are desperate. For many their UI ran out weeks ago. There are no fish. Therefore the fishermen cannot fish and the plant workers have no fish to process. They have no income and the meagre make-work funds that have been promised by the minister's department are tied up in red tape.

When are the fishermen and plant workers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence going to receive concrete proposals from this government?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is talking as if nothing is happening.

A program has been announced and is being put in place. We are aware of the people who were drawing unemployment insurance whose claims have finished. That is why we have announced measures.

The Liberal way would be to take taxpayers' funds not caring about the deficit or anything and to just throw money at the problem. That is the way they did it for 16 years. However that is not the way to go and it is not what we are doing. We are going to work with that sector