

Oral Questions

view this as an issue less serious than that of oil tanker safety?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member frequently in this House has made statements designed to create alarm on the west coast and elsewhere about policies with respect to the United States.

There are discussions with the United States with regard to plans that they might have concerning transit of their vessels in our waters. We are monitoring those discussions. We are making sure that Canadian interests are taken fully account of, and we are certainly going to ensure that Canadian interests are protected, including Canada's interest in being part of an effective international defence alliance of which port visits are an important part.

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FISHERIES

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of Fisheries. He seems to be under some confusion as to what he said in Halifax and I will tell him. I have got the transcript. He said: "They, fish plant workers and fishermen, will all work for 10 weeks and then sit down for 42 weeks". He said in Halifax: "All they got going for them is enough patience to qualify for UI". That is what he said. I want to tell him something else. In Rose Blanche as an example, 147 fishermen caught 4 million pounds, Prime Minister, in three months—

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Simmons: As I was saying, they work for 12 months in Rose Blanche and elsewhere, not 10 weeks.

How does the minister square his silly statement with the facts? The only sin of those people is that they want to work year round, which they could do if his government had the guts to drive the French, the Spanish and the Portuguese out so they could catch the fish.

An hon. member: What was the question?

Mr. Simmons: How does he square the two?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, it will give me great pleasure to give the hon. member a copy of my speech.

Mr. Simmons: I have it.

Mr. Valcourt: Well, I think you will need a good researcher. I have never said that.

Atlantic Canadians have been listening to these people in the last few weeks. What people in Atlantic Canada are telling us is that the fishery is an important part of our heritage and our economic life and people want to keep fishing. The fishermen and the plant workers should have the chance and should be given the ability to develop this trade as a skilful one by which they can earn a decent income.

In the past we have seen other branches of government at all levels, municipal, provincial and federal use the fishery as the scapegoat for all the economic problems. I say as the representative of the fishing industry in Atlantic Canada that we in the fishing industry are tired of being the scapegoat for others and we will not endure it any longer.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): The minister can squirm and twist all he wants. He said: "I never said it". This is a transcript of the question and his answer and I tell him he said it. He said that they want to sit down for 42 weeks—

Some hon. members: Question!

Mr. Simmons: I can't let him mislead the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that no members would want to mislead the House. I notice that the hon. member has certainly not said "deliberately", but I would ask the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the minister. After his two weeks of home-work and field-tripping across this great country, is this the result? Is his decision and strategy for dealing with the crisis and the disaster in the Atlantic fishery that he is going to kick those people when they are down? Is that his response, or is he going to recognize that those people have been working year-round until this government's policies made them sit at home because there are no fish left to catch? Is he going to come to their rescue with an aid program and then get on with flicking out the foreigners before they take all of our fish?