

Oral Questions

three countries on how we can improve our policies in those two areas. That is not in any way changing the nature of the agreement signed in December last year.

As it relates to import surges, let us see what the Americans have in mind. I do not know what the Americans have in mind. I do not think my hon. friend knows what the Americans have in mind. We do know they have confirmed many times that they are not going to reopen the agreement of December last year.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Currently there are 18 Americans working in a cement plant in Woodstock, Ontario. These Americans were given permits by Canadian officials to do mechanical jobs in an industry where there is a 50 per cent unemployment rate in Canada. In issuing these permits Canadian officials did not weigh the consequences to Canadian workers.

How can this government sit back and allow this to happen while badly needed Canadian jobs have been handed to Americans with this government's seal of approval?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the hon. member can stand up in this House and say this was done with the government's seal of approval.

Last December he brought this to the attention of the department. The officials at the office in question explained in detail in a letter to the hon. member how a mistake had been made. It was mentioned that only two weeks or days remained and it was explained to the hon. member that this had happened because of a mistake. He was assured by the officials in writing that steps had been taken to prevent this from happening in the future. That was last December.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, I do not want an assurance from a Canadian consulate member. I want an assurance from this minister and this government that they will not allow this to happen.

The Canadian consulate in Minneapolis, Minnesota admitted to a mistake in approving these applications, but this is unacceptable and it cost Canadian jobs.

I want to ask the minister responsible for international trade what he intends to do to prevent either the FTA or some ambiguous little clause in immigration policy from being used to provide foreigners with desperately needed Canadian jobs.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that this has nothing to do with the free trade agreement. An error was made due to misinterpretation by an officer of the department. I know that in a perfect world mistakes would not happen.

The hon. member wants to interpret the mistake as government policy when he knows it was not government policy, quite the contrary. We have a policy of hiring Canadians first and that is the way we operate throughout Canada. The mistake was explained to him.

Please do not try to mess up the free trade agreement with that. It has nothing to do with it.

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• (1505)

ABORIGINAL FISHING STRATEGY

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

When the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans last June announced his aboriginal fishing strategy for B.C., he said he was following the Sparrow decision of the Supreme Court. The fisheries committee asked the Minister of Justice to give a ruling on the Sparrow decision, about which many questions had been asked and arguments made in B.C. as to what extent it dealt with the commercialization of the aboriginal fishery.

Is the minister of fisheries aware of the importance of dealing with this question promptly?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. gentleman's question, I believe he knows full well that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans takes the advice of the Minister of Justice's department with