

FISHERIES

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, a serious situation is continuing to develop on the west coast regarding the native food fishery. Commercial fishermen are concerned that their livelihoods are being threatened in order to provide settlement of Indian land claims.

The commercial fishermen feel that they should not be called on to bear the brunt and cost of these claims, but that they are the responsibility of all Canadians.

While the threatened blockade of Vancouver harbour on May 31 will do nothing but annoy and inconvenience others, it shows the deep sense of frustration these fishermen feel.

I call on the government to remedy this difficult situation to prevent serious problems on the west coast this year, with meaningful discussions with all groups involved.

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TRADE

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, clearly one of the thrusts of the throne speech is free trade within Canada. But just as the FTA, a good deal is contingent upon the existence of a level playing field. We must ensure that a level playing field exists within Canada before we start breaking down the barriers to trade that now protect smaller markets like the Atlantic provinces.

A modern, up-to-date, competitive transportation system is fundamental to economic development and prosperity in Atlantic Canada.

Federal discrimination against the port of Halifax and consequently the whole competitive situation of Nova Scotia has been a bug-bear for many years.

While Montreal benefits from free ice-breaking, dredging and nav-aid services, user pay and compensatory rates have always been applied to the rail line that is Halifax's life blood to the rest of the nation. If user pay is to apply to Halifax, it should apply to Montreal. If user pay is to apply, then CN should be required by the government that owns it to effect cost saving technology when available. The acquisition of double-stacked cars will reduce costs by 20 per cent. The survival of the port

Oral Questions

of Halifax and the health of the Nova Scotian economy depends on it.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister.

In the Throne Speech, there is a part, which makes up about a third of the document, entitled "Participating in Prosperity". I don't see why it was not entitled "Sharing Hope". For the million and a half Canadians looking for jobs, there was little hope in yesterday's Throne Speech.

Here is my question to the Prime Minister; Does he not think that time has come to abandon the current economic policies of high dollar and high interest rates and replace them with policies which will immediately create jobs for the 1,500,000 unemployed who are feeling desperate right now?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the policies suggested by my colleague are precisely the ones we are following, with some success I may add.

[English]

Short-term interest rates have declined 500 basis points since last year and almost 100 basis points since the budget. The Canadian-U.S. interest rate differential is now around 300 basis points, down from 550 basis points.

My hon. friend talks about jobs. We have had a difficult time of it. After leading the industrialized world in job creation for six years, we have had a very bad year of it, but last month employment increased. I know my hon. friend will agree with me that the good news last Friday was that unemployment decreased by three-tenths of a percentage point, dropping unemployment down to 10.2 per cent.

There are encouraging signs in the economy, most important, the steady decline of interest rates and further signs that economic growth will be brought about in a non-inflationary manner. This is, of course, what the government has been seeking to do, and it is the only way to provide durable jobs.