

Oral Questions

I indicated to my hon. friend that it was our intention to co-operate with the provinces and all concerned to develop a comprehensive program that would be sensible, thoughtful and productive, that would help resolve—

An Hon. Member: It's none of those. Where's the money?

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, this is typical of the Liberals. They ask a serious question about the Atlantic fishery. When I try to provide a serious answer, all we get from the Liberals are cat-calls. This government is going to bring forward programs. We are going to leave the cat-calls and the denigration to the Liberals.

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): Mr. Speaker, all we hear right now from the government is that there will be no new money. We are willing and are waiting to co-operate, but we would like to have the means to co-operate and do things that are of value.

• (1420)

In the case of communities affected by cuts in the groundfish quota where entire communities will be wiped out, everybody knows that existing programs are not sufficient to respond to the extraordinary needs of these communities. Already, provincial and municipal governments have reacted negatively to this government's response, or lack of response.

These communities ask, when will they receive assurances that new programs with special funds will be made available to see them through the storm. That is all they ask.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I wrote, as my hon. friend knows, in the strongest possible terms to Jacques Delors, President of the European Community, and received a response offering to deal with this problem at the highest levels. The government is going to take advantage of that and there will be announcements made in this regard.

The government announced a substantial package of immediate assistance for those affected by the National Sea closures last month. This package includes programs of industrial assistance, a special program for older workers, and a community development fund. That was our immediate response. But for many months a special

cabinet committee has been developing a substantial package for the restructuring of the northern cod fishery. This will be carried out in conjunction with the provinces and the communities affected.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration is finalizing details on the application of the Community Futures Program which will provide—and this is very important to my hon. friend—substantial moneys to the communities affected. These funds can flow immediately.

In addition, \$50 million more will be directed to the Community Futures Program by the unemployment insurance bill which is presently stalled in the Senate. I have held meetings—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: Fifty million dollars more is available for Community Futures, and if my hon. friend wants to do something, tell the Liberal Senators to pass the bill.

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Prime Minister.

All we hear about is recycled or reprofiled sums of moneys just like we did with ACOA.

[*Translation*]

In addition to the crisis in the groundfish fisheries, there are also enormous problems which are in fact reaching crisis proportions in the lobster, snow crab and herring fisheries. Plants have already closed down, and several thousand people have been laid off. Is the government aware of the crisis that exists in New Brunswick, Eastern Quebec, and Prince Edward Island, or does the government intend to ignore the problem as it did in the case of northern cod and is it going to let the people in the Atlantic region slowly starve to death?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we are not only very much aware of the problem, we are working extremely hard to try and deal with it. We are also counting on the co-operation of the hon. member and his party to help us in this respect.

The hon. member referred to a crisis in the Atlantic region. He is a member from the province of New Brunswick. It is true that we have a very serious problem in the Atlantic fisheries. I think that, before sounding off in a way that might affect investment in his native