

Oral Questions

The fifth conference will be a concluding conference organized jointly by the Government of Canada and the five sponsoring institutes.

There had been talk, as the House will know, about a conference on aboriginal matters. I have had meetings with leaders of the four national aboriginal organizations. At the moment it is not their preference to proceed with a discussion on aboriginal issues, although that question is being discussed.

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NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Ken Hughes (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

The California Public Utilities Commission recently announced a decision which has the effect of abrogating long-term private contracts between Canadian natural gas producers on one hand and California consumers on the other. This would be very serious for our natural gas industry.

When will this minister respond to the strong and frequent representations from Alberta P.C. members of this House and take action to defend the interests of Canadian natural gas producers?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

This is a very serious issue. I would hope that all members of the House would join with the government in the actions that we plan to unveil tomorrow in Calgary. It is an issue that relates to the sanctity of contracts.

Natural gas has been provided to the California market. Since 1961 various administrations in this place have supported that type of export.

Tomorrow we will be joined by the province of Alberta, by the industry, and I hope by members on both sides of this House so that the sanctity of contracts remains and that the actions we propose tomorrow will be endorsed by this House.

ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, in the House last week the parliamentary secretary to the minister of fisheries stated that his minister was aware of what the fishermen and plant workers were saying regarding the inadequacy of the Atlantic Fisheries Catch Failure Program in which people who have been involved in the fisheries all their lives have not been able to qualify, or if they qualify there is no funding for the program.

If the minister is aware of this, I would like to ask him what he is going to do about it and when.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, it is my information that everyone in the areas affected who has a relationship to the fishery in accordance with the rules that were laid down is being looked after in this program. If there are any who have been missed, they can be included once they provide the information that shows they have a reasonable attachment to the fishery.

There is no problem with respect to money. The difficulty is that there are a fairly sizeable number of people without any reasonable attachment to the fishery who also have not qualified for unemployment insurance or who in the next month or two are coming off the unemployment insurance program and will then be looking for assistance. That is where the difficulty comes from.

Those with a reasonable attachment to the fishery, I believe have been looked after.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, last week at the same time in response to a question the Prime Minister said that the \$39 million, he claimed, provided for Newfoundland was not enough. In fact the \$39 million was for three provinces. So Newfoundland and Labrador got considerably less than that.

Anyway the Prime Minister said: "That is not enough for Newfoundlanders". The Prime Minister knows that there are some inadequacies in the program and the minister knows there are some inadequacies in the program despite what he just said.