

Oral Questions

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, this Government, whenever it has been shown that an additional program is needed to assist inshore fishermen, has instituted such programs.

I noticed, listening to the hon. gentleman with care, that he did not cite any facts whatever to establish the point that he is attempting to suggest, namely, that there has been a disastrous failure in the inshore fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador this year. He cited no facts because the facts do not support that statement.

There is no evidence, Mr. Speaker, of a disastrous inshore fishery about the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador this year. In certain locations fish may or may not have come in, as happens from time to time. Generally and by and large, the inshore fishery in Newfoundland has been a good and reasonable fishery this year. If there are areas where fishing disasters occur locally, where special assistance might be needed, certainly we would consider that.

● (1420)

I might point out to the hon. gentleman that we have invigorated and added funds to the Small Craft Harbours Program. For example, I announced last week the awarding of a contract in Bauline for a \$2.2 million breakwater for the fishermen of Bauline, as well as a \$2 million contract in Flat Rock for the same purpose, all of which assists our inshore fishery.

PROPOSED MEETING OF FISHERMEN

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I have been a Member of Parliament going on nine years now, and in those nine years I have met fishermen many times. I have often seen them angry. I have sometimes seen them frustrated and sometimes seen them happy, but I have never seen fishermen whose spirits were broken and who had tears in their eyes. If the Hon. Member for St. John's West were in his riding, he would know what the evidence is. It is human tragedy right on the wharf. That is the evidence.

There is also the evidence of a telegram from the President of the Fishermen's Union of Newfoundland and Labrador which says that there is mounting evidence of a failure of disastrous proportions of the inshore fishery in the Straits of Belle Isle and along the West Coast of Newfoundland. If the Hon. Member for St. John's West were less concerned about pork-barrelling in St. John's West and more concerned about—

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Hon. Member to put his question.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Fishermen and their families, wives and children, cannot wait for an election campaign for assistance.

If the Hon. Member for St. John's West wants evidence of what is happening out there in the inshore fishery, will he

accompany me, or will he have one of his colleagues accompany me to a public meeting to be held in St. Anthony, Newfoundland, Saturday night, where many hundreds of inshore fishermen who are hungry and whose families are hungry will turn out in the hope that someone is listening and someone will give them the same kind of consideration rightly given to the farmers of Canada when they needed help?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, we have yet to hear one solid fact, any fact, that shows, in the hon. gentleman's words, that there has been a disastrous failure of the inshore fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador this year. I can vouch for the fact that in the areas that I have visited which are in my own district, Peter's River, St. Mary's Bay and other places on the Avalon Peninsula, there has been quite a good inshore fishery this year.

There are some spots where the fishery is bad, like Lawn and the St. Lawrence area. There may be some areas in White Bay where the fishery has been bad, but the spirits of the fishermen are not broken. There has not been a disastrous inshore fishery in Newfoundland.

As a matter of fact, the cod fishery on the Labrador coast, particularly in the Black Tickle-Batteau area, has improved tremendously in the recent several weeks. The complaint there is that there is glut that cannot be handled. There is so much fish being caught that they cannot all be properly disposed of.

With reference to the mention of St. Anthony, I know that St. Anthony has recently come within the boundaries of the hon. gentleman's district, because this is the first time I have ever heard him mention St. Anthony in this House.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, we just heard from the Minister representing Newfoundland in the House of Commons that, providing there is no problem in St. John's West, there is no problem in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is exactly the problem with that kind of parochial, pompous mentality of this Minister.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER SEND REPRESENTATIVE TO MEETING

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the Minister obviously takes his cue from the Prime Minister who said: "I gave you \$261 million". What kind of morality has a Government that has a quarter of a billion dollars to help the re-election of a single Member, even the Hon. Member for Manicouagan, and no money for inshore fishermen who are hungry right now?

I ask the Minister again, if he cannot make it because he cannot find his way outside St. John's West, will he send representatives to St. Anthony to talk to real inshore fishermen in real difficulty who want real help, not more clichés in the run up to an election campaign, and who want help now?