

S.O. 21

Task Force Report, especially the suggestion that benefits paid to fishermen who have accumulated fifteen weeks of employment or more should be based on the earnings of their ten best weeks of fishing.

I am therefore asking for the co-operation of Members of all parties in this House so that we can adopt this Bill before June 4, which will be in the interests of all fishermen in Eastern Canada, and especially those in the Gaspé.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

FORMER DEFENCE PERSONNEL'S EXPOSURE TO NUCLEAR RADIATION

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I wish, through you, to call to the attention of the House an important matter related to the Canadian atomic veterans. The Government knows that during the 1950s and 1960s approximately 300 members of the Canadian Armed Forces participated in a nuclear defence group, and a number of fighter pilots were exposed to nuclear radiation in the course of their duties. Exposure sites included atomic bomb tests at Nevada, and Maralinga in Australia.

It is our contention that some years ago the Department of National Defence made a commitment to protect those individuals exposed to radiation in the course of their duties. That protection had not been forthcoming. The Government has largely turned its back on those veterans today.

In the United States, however, the United States Government has now acknowledged the potential difficulties of the exposure to radiation of its servicemen in the bomb tests in Nevada, and has agreed to provide free medical services to all those veterans. This is a major step forward in the process of recognition of the dangers of exposure to nuclear radiation.

With other Members of the House I suggest it is time the federal Government recognized its obligations and fulfilled its commitment to the Canadian atomic veterans. The Government should immediately issue a statement that all Canadian veterans who participated in the nuclear defence group, all those fighter pilots who were exposed in high altitude flights to atomic bomb tests in other countries, should—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

POLAND—STUDENT MARTYR VICTIM OF MARTIAL LAW

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, police brutality in Poland resulted in the death of a 19-year old student, Grzegorz Przemyski, and a new martyr for the cause of opposition to martial law in Poland was born.

Twenty thousand mourners, in the largest peaceful demonstration held in Warsaw since the imposition of martial law, heard read the Lech Walesa telegram, "Every death is painful but this one is especially brutal—it will not be forgotten." The Solidarity movement was a peaceful movement by masses of Polish people simply wanting a little greater freedom of individual expression. Now, with the alleged suspension of martial law, civil, human and workers' rights continue to be brutally trampled upon. The Gdansk Accords are still being completely and flagrantly violated. In short, all of the major advances of Solidarity over its 16 months of existence have been rolled back.

● (1110)

The free peoples of the world must not allow the alleged suspension of martial law to serve as a political ploy to convince the world that, for a people who have enjoyed one thousand years of Christianity, life for them has returned to normal. We must all protest in the strongest terms possible the continued grievous violations of basic civil and workers' rights in Poland.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CENTRAL AMERICA—SUPPORT FOR PEACE INITIATIVES

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, major peace initiatives in Central America are currently being promoted by Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, referred to as the "Contadora Group". These countries are discussing ways and means to bring about a reduction of violence and tension in Central America and an eventual peaceful settlement.

In a communiqué dated May 11, 1983, the Government of Canada indicated support for the work of the Contadora Group. It considers this work as an important step in the process of reconciliation and peaceful settlement. It has been the view of the Government of Canada that the resolution of difficulties in Central America requires a process of discussion and dialogue between the various Governments concerned.

The Government of Canada is prepared to do whatever it can to facilitate and encourage this process if the countries directly concerned feel that Canada can play a useful, positive, and effective role. Canada has protested the waves of violence in those countries. It has offered its good offices to provide a site in Canada, or abroad at a Canadian embassy, for negotiations. Canada supports the right of each country to enjoy genuine independence, non-alignment, and stability, without threat of outside interference. It is a concern that, to date, countries directly involved in facilitating and encouraging dialogue and discussion have not availed themselves of this genuine offer. Nevertheless, I feel that it is important that Canada keep its lines of communication open to these directly concerned nations in the event that its help is requested.