

Supply

Since I came to this House I have talked about the plight of the fishermen. Some of the time I have been talking about the deep sea fishery and the impact of the pillaging by ships from Spain and Portugal. That has had a very serious and devastating impact. As recently as yesterday in Question Period, and on other occasions, I raised that issue and will continue to do so.

There is another set of circumstances that is also pulverizing a group of people in my riding. It is not the deep sea fishery per se, although it is an aspect of the fishery. I am thinking about the southwest coast of Newfoundland, the communities that start with Hermitage, Gaultois, McCallum, François, Grey River, Ramea, Burgeo, Grand Bruit, La Poile, Petites, Rose Blanche, Burnt Islands, Isle aux Morts, Fox Roost and Margaree, and Port au Bras. Those communities traditionally have had two fisheries, a winter fishery and a summer fishery.

For the purposes of simplicity I want to talk about the winter fishery, which takes place from January to March. That fishery traditionally has been a very lucrative fishery for those people but the bottom has gone out of it, not just this year but for the last four years. For example, people in the community of McCallum caught 178,000 pounds last year during the winter fishery and caught 61,000 this year, one-third of last year's catches. People in François caught 62,000 last year and caught 10,000 this year, one-sixth.

In the 1987 winter fishery people in Rose Blanche caught four million pounds. This year they caught a little over 1,000 or 2,000 pounds. The bottom has gone out. People did not look to unemployment because they fished winter and summer. They fished 30, 40 or 45 weeks a year. There are people on that coast who never drew any unemployment until this year because it was not worth their while. They fished 45 weeks a year and by the time they got their forms filled out it was time to go back fishing again.

I talked to such a man in the last few weeks. When I asked him whether he had enough stamps, as we call it, to get his unemployment he nearly poked me out. He took it as an insult because he had never even thought of fishing in that context. He told me that if his pride allowed him to draw UI this year, it would be the first time he had ever bothered to do so.

• (1050)

Those people in Rose Blanche, Burnt Islands and Isle aux Morts are in dire circumstances. I see from your

signal, Madam Speaker, that my time is running out. There were other things I wanted to say but I understand I just have a minute left.

I would like to comment very quickly to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I greatly admire him in some respects but he puzzles me on this one. Why has he been so stubborn? Why has he obviously set out to punish those people in those communities I have mentioned? Why has he turned his back completely on the people in dire straits in those communities who, through no fault of their own, are hurting?

Those people went to St. John's as recently as a month ago. They met with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He made a commitment that he would have an interim solution to their problem by May 15.

May 15 has come and gone. I wrote the minister about this issue two weeks ago and I am still waiting for an answer. I know he is a busy person but these people are hurting. They need some answers. I think they have waited long enough for those answers.

Those are the human reasons we are not going to support this motion because to give this government another \$48 billion without knowing whether a few shekels of it are going to be given to my fishermen and plant workers would be to betray those people.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans may betray them, but I would like him to assure me that he is not going to. I can tell him that I will not betray them. I invite him to join me in doing something worth while for those people while there is still some time.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Burin—St. George's. He talked a lot about the deep economic pain existing in his community and right across the country.

I am not sure if he mentioned the fact that the interest rates are at the lowest they have ever been in 20 years and inflation is practically non-existent. We on this side of the House in debate would not want to exclude some of the good things that are happening in this country right now.

However, I am having a difficult time in figuring out how we can rekindle the confidence in this country again. I am feeling in my community in downtown Toronto a sense of no confidence. People with jobs seem to be lacking in confidence more than those without jobs. One