

Government Orders

the lion's share of those who depend on the fishery, and let us keep that in mind.

Most people want to work with the fisheries officers. Most people recognize they have a substantial role to play in conservation. That is important to remember as we deal with penalties for fisheries offences.

We heard a number of things from some excellent witnesses. We had a very good week of very interesting, articulate, and perceptive witnesses. They told us a number of things and I think I summarize fairly, in general terms, when I say, first, hit the violators hard. "Nail them to the cross" was the way one group from British Columbia put it. Have the support of the courts. It is essential that the courts support not only the amendments to the Fisheries Act, but the fisheries officers and the peace officers who bring the charges.

• (1800)

If this House can send a message to the judicial system, I think all of us would agree that that message should be to make the penalties suit the seriousness of the crime. As we heard from witnesses, ensure that the penalties reflect not only the severity of the crime but the enterprise involved, recognizing that a \$200 fine to one fisherman is nothing compared to another. Quite clearly, what we heard a lot was to have the fisheries minister use his or her power to lift licences, and to suspend or cancel licences.

As parliamentary secretary, I can tell the House that this Minister of Fisheries intends to do exactly that, because the suspension of a fisheries licence is equally applied. I was very impressed by the number of witnesses who told us to do exactly that.

I would be remiss and, frankly, quite frustrated if I did not respond to a few of the comments made here today. I will do so briefly. I think it is important to note the number of comments, particularly from my friends from Prince Edward Island, and also raised by witnesses, in terms of the department's ability to enforce the regulations, to provide the surveillance and management. It is a very legitimate question.

As we look at offences on both coasts and in the freshwater, as we think about the new quotas we will have to deal with in the next couple of weeks and the new regulations stemming from Hâché and Dunn, it is important.

There are 758 fisheries officers in 248 locations across this country and 17 other agencies can also enforce the Fisheries Act. We also have a number of ships. With the closing of Summerside, all that air surveillance disappears. To replace the DND surveillance we went to private aircraft. For the same money we got more hours. Today, DFO delivers over 7,000 hours of air surveillance at a cost of approximately \$12 million. Our observer program is quite extensive and quite well known. We have new funding for surveillance and enforcement; in the Atlantic over \$38 million over five years and in the Pacific almost \$6 million. I think that is important.

We heard a fair bit about the Fraser River, and I think quite rightly so. Our friends in the New Democratic Party and, indeed, all the people of British Columbia are quite concerned about the Fraser River. I would draw their attention to the comments made in the green plan where quite clearly the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is committed to doubling the amount of salmon in that river. It is going to take a lot of work. The government also recognizes that it will take a co-ordinated approach, using the provincial governments, the support of the stakeholder groups, people who are knowledgeable and anxious and are willing to participate. We will deal with some of the habitat questions and some of the fish questions.

It is an important endeavour and I think it is fair to say that the success of the salmon enhancement programs that we have seen in British Columbia are due for credit, and that is because there has been a shareholder approach. It is not just the federal government throwing money at it. It is the federal government in co-operation with industry, user groups, associations and the provincial government. That is why we have such a fruitful and productive salmon fishery on the west coast, and hopefully we can see some of that on the east coast in the future.

On the question of live cod, I would have to pursue this question with my colleague from Vancouver. We may be talking about a different kind of cod than my friend from Labrador and I know.

Mention was made about cutting ACOA. ACOA's money was reprofiled. My friend from Charlottetown said the government does not pay any attention to regional development because it cut ACOA. This government introduced ACOA. This government intro-