

Supply

Mr. Keyes: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

My apologies to the hon. member for the interruption. With all due respect to the Chair, are we to break with the traditions of this place, that is to say that on this allocated day the mover of the motion, in this case the Official Opposition, would normally in the course of events by fourth intervener in this debate?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I understand the hon. member's question since he himself came to the Chair to talk about it with me, except that I checked afterwards with our advisors, with the Clerk.

This tradition exists, but there is also the tradition of alternating between one side of the House and the other. The Chair is still in an awkward position: Which of the two traditions should prevail? Under the circumstances, since I saw the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore right away, I thought that I would recognize him, since I make it a duty to recognize an opposition member right after a speech by a government member.

Once again, this is not an easy decision to make and I take good note of the comment by the hon. member for Hamilton West. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in the debate. Usually in the House the members from Newfoundland have spoken about this issue so much that whatever part of Canada we are from, we have heard of it and understand it to be a very serious issue. I have taken a personal interest in it myself.

• (1200)

I would like to begin by following on the point as to whether or not this is a non-confidence motion. I heard the minister say that he was treating it as a confidence motion and therefore wanted government members to vote against the motion. Others have spoken on the other side of that.

I would like to suggest that it is very important to make a distinction between the government and Parliament. We are gathered here in this Chamber as Canada's parliamentarians to debate a serious issue, and I would have thought it would be helpful to the government to have a clear and strong statement reflecting our views on this issue, which it could then use to its advantage in dealing with the international community in direct bilateral and multilateral relationships and discussions.

I think too often the mistake made here is to obscure the distinction between the government and the House of Commons. On this issue I certainly would express my view on the record that this need not be construed as a confidence vote. I certainly do not see it that way.

The issue has been raised by the member from Newfoundland who sponsors the resolution, particularly in human terms. He has talked about the suffering by fishermen in his home province, and it is certainly a serious issue right across Atlantic Canada. The numbers are evidence of that. In the last three years alone we have seen some 38 permanent plant closures with a net loss of jobs in the Atlantic Canada fishing industry of some 5,200. That is particularly severe in Newfoundland where there is already 20 per cent or so unemployment.

We have seen the current shortage of harvestable cod resulting in two major plant closures and 1,500 lay-offs, as well some 16 vessels tied up. Other members have spoken about the various statistics and the numbers are clear; this is a crisis in the north Atlantic cod fishery.

Putting it in some perspective, many histories have been written about the North Atlantic fishery, both scholarly and popular. One of the more popular treatments, drawing on the scientific information has been authored by Farley Mowatt. His book is entitled *Sea of Slaughter*. That book documents very well how through the past centuries the North Atlantic was a very plentiful, bountiful area for all forms of marine mammals and fish stocks. Indeed many species of whales are now extinct because of their harvesting, the whaling industry. We have seen a general decline in the North Atlantic fishery and the elimination and loss of many species, clearly due to direct human intervention through fishing.