

Search and Rescue

Mr. Rompkey: I certainly do. We may even rescue you one of these days. I want, first of all, Mr. Speaker, to reply to some of the comments made by the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Whiteway). I appreciate it is his responsibility to get the kind of information he is seeking, and I believe in general terms that when it is available it should be forthcoming. I am afraid he is not going to get all the answers he wants from what I have to say, but I want to point out that the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. LeBlanc) is out of the country at the moment on business which is very important to the fishing industry of this country, and it is unfortunate that he could not be here today. Obviously, he would have been able to give a much more substantive answer.

I hope the hon. member will not think that some of what I say is irrelevant. He mentioned search and rescue regarding certain swimming pools in the country, and what I have to say is not more irrelevant than that particular aspect of search and rescue. I do want to talk about the question of jurisdiction, which was one of the points the hon. member raised. He finds there are a number of different departments involved in the administration of search and rescue operations, and I think that up until a while ago this was a problem. However, some of the difficulty has now been resolved.

I want to talk about the jurisdictional aspect of the hon. member's remarks in the context of the research done by the interdepartmental committee of senior officials on search and rescue. I want to talk about the question of how government ships and aircraft have been co-ordinated for fishery surveillance and enforcement.

● (1720)

Commencing in March, 1975, the interdepartmental committee representing the Department of National Defence, the Department of Transport, and Treasury Board, was established under the chairmanship of the Department of Fisheries and the Environment to examine the most cost-effective means of conducting fishery surveillance and enforcement on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. The interdepartmental committee was asked to make recommendations to cabinet on the minimum levels of additional surveillance and enforcement capabilities, equipment and associated costs that would be required prior to Canada extending its fisheries jurisdiction. The committee was requested to define appropriate criteria and to establish minimum levels of effort to be dedicated to the air and surface surveillance of foreign and Canadian fishing activity offshore, and to the enforcement of fisheries regulations required to achieve a credible management regime and effective conservation of Canada's fishery resources.

It was also requested that the committee identify all shortfalls in both surface and air surveillance between existing and proposed minimum levels of effort; the most cost-effective mix of existing federal resources, ships and aircraft, to eliminate the shortfalls; and the associated equipment and cost that would be required to overcome the identified shortfalls.

The interdepartmental committee's examination of this subject resulted in a report to cabinet in early 1976. The commit-

tee concluded that the minimum level of fishery surveillance patrol activity required for effective surveillance of fishing activity enforcement of regulations must be sufficient to permit at-sea inspection of one third of the foreign fleet and one sixth of the Canadian fleet every month. At the same time, the patrol fleet must maintain a Canadian presence over all of the most lucrative fishing grounds found within 200 miles of our coasts. Air patrols must be sufficient to permit location and identification of every fishing vessel in areas of Canadian interest, once per week throughout the year as a minimum, with an additional increase in total flying activity to ensure more frequent coverage of sensitive areas and areas of high foreign fleet concentration.

In order to meet these requirements it was determined that a total of 1,950 on-station sea days and 4,230 flying hours were necessary. It was also pointed out that the Department of Fisheries and the Environment could not, alone, meet these required levels and that it would, therefore, be necessary to rely on support both for aircraft and ships from the Department of National Defence and for ships from the Department of Transport. It was established that the Department of Fisheries and the Environment would carry out 56 per cent of the sea patrols, Department of National Defence about 31 per cent, and MOT vessels about 13 per cent. The entire air surveillance needs would be met through the utilization of DND tracker and long-range patrol aircraft.

The findings of this committee were endorsed by all three operating departments, as well as Treasury Board and the Department of External Affairs. The cabinet approved these recommendations and on June 10, 1976, the hon. Roméo LeBlanc publicly announced that, effective immediately, Canada would be doubling its level of seaborne surveillance and more than doubling its level of aircraft surveillance. To achieve these increased levels of surveillance 23 vessels are utilized on the Atlantic coast, 8 Fisheries and Environment patrol vessels, 12 destroyers and 3 transport vessels. A total of nine vessels are being used on the Pacific coast, 3 Fisheries and Environment patrol vessels, 4 destroyers and 2 transport ships. The increased levels of air surveillance are being maintained through the use of 15 tracker aircraft and 12 Argus aircraft on the Atlantic coast.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Whiteway) on a point of order.

Mr. Whiteway: This is rather enlightening, but Lake Winnipeg, which was specifically mentioned in my request, is some 2,500 miles from the area being described by the hon. member. I wonder if he might address himself specifically to what the interdepartmental task force said about Lake Winnipeg. That was my question.

Mr. Rompkey: Mr. Speaker, in all fairness, the hon. member's original question, as I understood it, dealt with the deployment of search and rescue facilities in general, and then the last line of the question dealt with Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Whiteway: That is not so.