

Fisheries

copy of his statement to my office about 15 minutes prior to the opening of the House.

While we welcome any move that will result in the conservation of our declining fisheries resources, it is somewhat regrettable that the best agreement which could be reached with Denmark at this time on the conservation of Atlantic salmon is one that limits their catch this year to an amount similar to the take in 1969. I point out to the minister that a limit on the number of vessels that will be used in the fishery really has no bearing on the take of salmon by the Danes. All that is required under an agreement of this type is for fishing activity to be speeded up, and with a declining number of vessels, the Danes can still take as many or even more fish than were taken in previous years.

The minister has stated that in 1969 the reported catch off west Greenland was in excess of 2,000 metric tons, which was equivalent to the total commercial catch off the east coast of Canada in that year. This is a large quantity of salmon. As a result of the huge take of salmon on the high seas our salmon stocks have declined all along the east coast until today this species is rapidly becoming one of the extinct species off our coast. We simply cannot sustain this amount of fishing activity.

There has never been a period in the history of our fishing industry when our over-all fisheries resources have been so sorely threatened. This point, which has been made time and again, was made very forcefully by representatives of the industry when they held their 26th annual meeting in Ottawa between May 2 and May 5. At that time, one of the resolutions put forward by the Fisheries Council of Canada called for recognition of the concept that anadromous species of fish such as salmon were the rightful property of the country of origin and other countries should therefore refrain from catching them.

It seems that this concept has not been put forward forcefully enough by our representatives and our spokesmen in the Department of External Affairs when attending international meetings on this problem. There has been little or no change within the last decade in fishing operations carried out in international waters. It makes no sense whatever for Canada to spend approximately \$2 million annually on the development of salmon stocks and in restoring salmon runs if other nations adopt the attitude that high seas fishing can be continued without regard to the source of the salmon.

We welcome this announcement as only a very small step in the right direction. I cannot urge too strongly upon the minister the need for securing agreement at the 1973 International Conference on the Law of the Sea on the concept that anadromous species such as salmon belong to the country of origin.

I understand that at the present time a congressional investigation is being held in the United States on this matter. It may be advisable for the minister to bring the subject before the fisheries committee, composed of members of this House, for consultation on this important

[Mr. Crouse.]

matter. Nothing short of a total ban on the catching of salmon on the high seas is acceptable to the members of the official opposition.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, our group welcomes the announcement by the minister. I regret that I did not have an opportunity to study his remarks. The copy of his statement was sent to the member of the fisheries committee who usually responds for our party.

The information that we have come to some kind of an agreement with Denmark on the conservation of the Atlantic salmon fishery is of great interest, I am certain, to all hon. members, especially those who live on the east coast. However, I point out to the minister that while overfishing by the Danes has been the cause of most of our trouble with regard to the depletion of Atlantic salmon, pollution has also been a cause. In numerous rivers on the east coast where the salmon have normally spawned pollution has prevented them from going up these streams to spawn. This is another aspect which the government must study if we are to obtain any real benefit from the agreement with Denmark. We must do something with regard to our streams in Canada to ensure that spawning areas are available when these fish come to the east coast to spawn.

● (11:20 a.m.)

I have attended several meetings of the fisheries committee. There have been repeated warnings by individuals who have appeared before that committee with regard to declining stocks of other species of fish off the east coast of Canada. Along with the hon. member who has just spoken and other hon. members, I urge the minister to do everything possible to carry out the investigations which are necessary to ensure that this vital and valuable fishery on the east coast of Canada is retained and expanded in the years to come.

We certainly welcome this announcement and hope it is one of the first of many steps to make sure that we conserve our fisheries for all time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the difficult situation in which our east coast fishermen find themselves and we appreciate all measures taken to improve their lot.

That agreements be entered into with other countries, that is good. But, if the government dealt with the pollution problems of both the east and the west coasts of Canada, that would be of great help to the fishing industry which is surely of value to the country. I say it again, any measure to help east coast fishermen will have the support of my colleagues, especially the Social Credit members. I am happy to hear the minister inform us this morning of the measures presently taken to help the fishing industry in eastern Canada.