

In this motion we are merely asking the government to consider doing something. Surely it commends itself to the support of the House. I am looking forward to hearing from that great fisheries man, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. Fleming), that good and honourable friend of mine. I know he is trying to do his best; he always does. I look forward to his speech on this most complex subject. I know he will make a good speech, for I know that he does not approve of what has taken place in Canada since the Liberal party, in national convention assembled in Ottawa in 1973, passed the resolution calling for a separate department of fisheries.

I urge the parliamentary secretary to impress on his colleagues the importance of this motion for the morale of the department with which he is now associated and for the morale of the men and women of the Fisheries Service of Canada who are now members of the Department of the Environment and who have been thwarted in their efforts to give the fisheries question the importance it deserves, the importance which is so essential in this most crucial historic era when Canada is to implement the 200-mile economic zone.

All the arguments have been placed on record during the past three or four years and I will not repeat them. However, I believe there is a new and more compelling argument for the establishment of a separate department of fisheries, namely, the 200-mile limit. If the government will not implement the recommendations or resolutions of its own party's convention, I urge it to adopt the compromise solution it worked out following the 1974 election campaign and reinstitute a separate ministry for fisheries. That, at least, would be an improvement over the present situation. I hope the House will support this motion.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Question.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Anderson: That great fisherman!

Mr. Peters: —last night I heard a colleague of the hon. member opposite speaking on television of the great inland fishery of northern Ontario. That is not why I am rising to support the motion proposed by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). I agree that it is timely.

In the last two weeks, fishermen from both the east and west coast of Canada have visited me and asked me to make representations. Both groups expressed the concern expressed by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) about the present difficulties of the fishing industry. Both groups of fishermen were concerned because although negotiations had allowed fishermen of other countries to take fish from our waters, little assistance was given to our fishermen for providing the Canadian public with the benefits of fish caught by our coastal fishery. That is to say, on neither coast have we provided much protection for our fishermen.

In the last several months this House has debated motions calling for the establishment of a Canadian coastal and mer-

chant fleet. As we said, our country's coastline is among the largest, if not the largest, in the world. As the hon. member for St. John's East just said, the government is to impose a 200-mile limit. The question is, how are we to administer it? We were unable to administer properly the three-mile limit, and still less able to administer the 12-mile limit. Therefore, I say that our chance of administering or enforcing the 200-mile limit is nil; there is zilch chance of our being able to administer that limit, given our present type of operation. The fishermen indicate that they cannot be protected against abuses taking place.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have enough people to inspect ships entering our ports to determine if excessive amounts of fish have been caught. We cannot tell what type of fish other countries are taking. Fishermen have suggested that Canada has been lax in that we are not capable of looking after our own fishery operating off our coasts. We are not as capable in that regard as either Iceland or Greenland.

An hon. Member: That's the hon. member's opinion.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, an hon. member opposite makes noises from his seat, but rarely says these things when he is on his feet. The member who previously represented the hon. member's riding was always willing to speak on this subject; he spoke intelligently, and not while sitting down. He spoke in support of both the canning industry and fishermen. Coming from the coastal area, he was familiar with matters of concern on the coast. The previous hon. member said that we will neither be able to enforce the 200-mile limit nor, given our present operation, provide assistance to our fishermen who will be fishing off our own shores. We shall not be able to help them unless we pass immediately marketing legislation which will enable our fishermen to compete with the fishermen of other countries. We must be able to compete with the offshore fishery. I hope the hon. member opposite who interjected, I think, and comes from a coastal area will make a speech on behalf of our fishermen.

A few moments ago I mentioned the inland fishery of my part of Canada. I am concerned about the fishery and, frankly, I do not care if the minister of fisheries, whoever he may be, comes from the east or the west coast. If the hon. member opposite stands up and makes an impassioned appeal in favour of a separate department, he may become the new minister of fisheries, especially if he shows that he understands the subject. I am not opposed to his being so appointed because I think he is most capable, even though he makes comments while sitting down. As I say, I am not opposed to his being appointed minister of fisheries. I do say that there should be a minister of fisheries. He should not be a minister of state; I think such designations are stupid. I think the minister should be known as the minister of fisheries, and let us stop playing games with English whereby we try to make some ministries seem more important than others.

I was asked to say by my leader, who had to leave, that the fishery is as important to the Canadian population as agriculture, and therefore deserves a full-time minister.