

Government Organization Act, 1970

wick? The minister has been made aware of these problems. In reply to a letter from A. M. Smith & Co. Ltd., dated November 5, the minister stated:

In 1971, there will obviously have to be a system, and both the corporation and the advisory committee are now concentrating on this problem. Moreover, the 1971 season will also call for a rationalization of the industry because the drying capacity is much too large, both on the basis of 1970 production and what may be expected in future. Allocation of fish to individual plants involves, of course, determination of which plants are really needed in the long run, and what is to be the position of plants in a non-participating province.

This is a serious matter, Mr. Chairman. Yet another of our fishing industries may have to close down. At the present time Nova Scotia is not a participating province. I asked the minister a few days ago what efforts he had made and whether he had used his influence on the Premier of Nova Scotia so that it would become a participating province and could purchase supplies of codfish from Newfoundland. In reading the minister's reply, I was not very impressed. As a matter of fact, he did not choose to answer my question; he simply stated that only Quebec and Newfoundland would be participating provinces. This means approximately 200 more people engaged in processing saltfish in my native province of Nova Scotia will more than likely be unemployed in the near future.

The Minister of Fisheries gave the assurance that Nova Scotia saltfish plants which can perform the services needed, at no greater cost, would receive a reasonable share of fish. However, it would appear that the share allocated to Nova Scotia fish processors has been very small indeed. I mention these matters so that hon. members may realize the extent of the problems facing the fishing industry. These are not dissimilar to those which face other primary producers. I have sat in this House and listened to what has been said on behalf of wheat farmers and western producers. In Atlantic Canada we face equally serious difficulties which require the concentrated effort and attention of a minister of fisheries.

● (9:20 p.m.)

The bill before the House calls for a minister of the environment. The amendment moved by my hon. friend from St. John's East asks that it be amended to provide for a minister of fisheries and the environment. I see only one objection to that amendment—that it comes from this side of the House and has been made by a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament. This makes the amendment partisan and therefore it cannot be accepted by the government. What a farce this government is and what a sham and delusion it is making of power. Not one Liberal member from Atlantic Canada has had the backbone to stand up and declare himself on this issue. They have the backbone of a jellyfish.

An hon. Member: Hear hear!

Mr. Crouse: They are as limp as the net which hangs over the side of a ship.

An hon. Member: They are afraid of what the Prime Minister might say.

[Mr. Crouse.]

Mr. Crouse: As one of my hon. friends has said, they are afraid of what the Prime Minister might say if they take a stand to indicate that the interests of the people in Atlantic Canada and of those who make a living from the sea ought to be given a measure of priority by the government. I ask, in the name of this vital industry which is struggling desperately for its place in the sun, that we at least give it the benefit of the advertising advantage which would accrue to it if we had a minister of fisheries and the environment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Chairman, I should like to present the argument again from a slightly different aspect than we have heard so eloquently for the last hour or so. I make no apology for it. The last two speeches have been powerful indeed but they have also accomplished something else. We know that my hon. friend from St. John's East, by a skilful flick of his wrist was able to induce many fish to snap at the bait he was throwing out to the committee. This was an amusing display in itself and I hope we all profited from it, including, most of all, the victims. I will not name the victims because they have stood up and been counted.

What impressed me more than that, though my hon. friend from St. John's East is a pretty good angler, was that the message is finally getting home. One could see landlubber members on the other side appreciate that there is more than just a quibbling exercise going on this evening; that there are people here from a part of Canada that feels very strongly that a department which has had strong ties with the history of Parliament should not be allowed to disappear in the way that insensitive technocrats propose it should. I intend to elaborate on this argument again because I think it is important.

As I said before, there is no primary producer in this country who would willingly allow the name of the department serving him to disappear. If we tried to get rid of the Department of Agriculture there would be such a beating of plowshares about the ears of a minister who proposed such a dastardly step that the country would echo and re-echo with it. Perhaps we do not have the same power on behalf of our fishermen or the same acreage to represent, but we intend to do what we can for them.

It seems to me that when my hon. friend from St. John's East was casting his skilful line and drawing those responses, and also when my hon. friend from my neighbouring riding in Nova Scotia, South Western Nova, was making his point, that suddenly there were members on the other side whose consciences were becoming alerted—

Mr. McGrath: Would my hon. friend permit a question?

Mr. McCleave: I wonder if I could finish the sentence first? Then I will be glad to accept a question.