

Fisheries Act

• (4:50 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McGrath: Many people in the world today are coming round to this way of thinking. The world is desperately in need of protein—the type of protein we have in abundance in our Atlantic and Pacific fisheries. There are strong suggestions that because of the necessity of cleaning up the air of our cities, leading to efforts to replace the internal combustion engine, the world demand for oil may decrease. But the population expansion ensures that world demand for protein will continue. So, we have some decisions to make.

I believe the government should adopt a policy now, before it is too late, of refusing to countenance drilling for oil on the continental shelf of this country such as would impose a threat to the fishing resources of the Grand Banks. I believe the time has come for us to make this decision. I believe the world will applaud such a decision.

This is one aspect of the legislation now before the House which gives me some encouragement. At least the minister will in future have legislative authority to take the steps I have indicated to prevent this kind of pollution from taking place, provided he can get his colleagues in the cabinet to agree. We know from experience that if drilling for oil proceeds on the continental shelf off the Atlantic coast there will be accidental spills, and if these spills occur, the only effective method found to date of clearing up the oil is by using straw. In other words, straw is used to soak up the oil after it has floated ashore on our beaches, after it has destroyed untold quantities of plankton and other minute forms of sea life on which our groundfish depend. We know enough about the consequences of oil pollution to be in a position to make this decision. The minister was very quick to reach a decision in connection with the Georgia Straits incident in British Columbia. He had our support when he did so. I do not think the government can any longer refrain from making the inevitable decision with respect to the continental shelf off Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. The great oil companies of the world have been pouring millions of dollars into prospecting for oil for the past several years; they know that eventually they will strike oil. A decision will have to be made.

In addition to the danger of oil spills which would result from drilling for oil on the con-

[Mr. McGrath.]

tinental shelf, another hazard faces us in the form of a huge 100,000 barrel refinery which is to be built in Placentia Bay in the little village of Come-By-Chance. This is the bay which suffered so greatly from the effects of the phosphorous pollution, a consequence of the government's inability to prevent such pollution occurring. Anyone who knew anything about the operation of a phosphorous reduction plant in such a location knew that pollution was bound to occur. The area affected is only now getting over this setback; we are only now beginning to restore the damage done to our image in the eyes of the world, especially in the markets of the United States.

I look forward to asking the minister, when we are in committee, what steps he proposes to take with the authority Parliament is giving to him under this measure to ensure that there will be no repetition of what took place at Long Harbour when this 100,000 barrel refinery goes into production. What will happen when the petro-chemical industry which is supposed to follow the building of the refinery begins its operations? Oil refineries and petro-chemical plants are among the most serious polluters of coastal waters.

I am not at all satisfied that the government has taken the necessary precautions in this case. The promoters of this industrial complex have been hard at it for a number of years and have made no secret of the fact that they have every reason to expect their efforts to materialize. The refinery is to be built, we understand, in an extremely sensitive area as far as the fishing resources of the Grand Banks are concerned; there are also, of course, the resources of Placentia Bay itself to be considered.

I see it is five o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE
DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of the adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Skoberg)—Housing—suspension of C.M.H.C. loans in larger cities; the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie)—Historic Sites—acquisition of residence of Sir Robert Borden.