

*The Address—Mr. Rompkey*

ans may not be entirely satisfied with their present role in confederation, but they know full well the blessings of confederation, and they want very much to be a part of this country.

We are a people who have been known for our generosity and not our selfishness. I know that while Newfoundlanders want fiercely to defend their own interests, they will want to ensure that the country is strong too, in energy supply and in every other way. I believe that both of these aims can be achieved. But we will be watching closely as the negotiations go on between Ottawa and Newfoundland. I will be watching as a Newfoundlander and as a Canadian.

● (1640)

In the meantime we have serious problems that are of an immediate nature. Some of the oil discoveries are near our most historic and richest fishing grounds, the Grand Banks. There is imminent danger of the non-renewable resource destroying the renewable; and the fish, Mr. Speaker, will be there, we hope, long after the oil is gone. That is why, as I said earlier, controlled development is so important. Newfoundland and Labrador have depended on, and will continue to depend on fish as the mainstay of the economy. Therefore it is urgent that a proper contingency plan for dealing with oil spills be put in place. To my knowledge there is not one. I would suggest to my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. McGrath) who, I know, shares my concern, that he see to it that such a plan, together with the necessary equipment placed in Newfoundland and Labrador, is put in operation immediately. He has the authority and the responsibility for this and he should act right away.

I want to congratulate my hon. colleague from St. John's East, Mr. Speaker, and to wish him well in his portfolio as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He is the first Newfoundlander to hold that portfolio. Much will be expected of him, in his home province as well as other areas of Canada. He has distinguished himself in this chamber as a member of Parliament. I hope his policies will be in line with his proposals. He will have some tough decisions to make. For our part, Mr. Speaker, we will be watching closely to see that those decisions are in the best interests of the fishermen and of the industry as a whole.

The Speech from the Throne tells us that a white paper will be produced on the fishery. After six months in office, when there are serious problems to be resolved the best this government can do is a white paper. No doubt this is all part of the plan for greater consultation. That is fine, Mr. Speaker, but I would ask the minister what consultation there was with inshore fishermen before large vessels were allowed back in the Gulf recently to fish for cod. This is an action which was undertaken without consultation. Yet the minister has said in his Corner Brook speech and elsewhere that emphasis must be given to the inshore fishery, and that the communities along the northeast coast of Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador must be protected.

We could not agree more, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the minister in saying this, is continuing the policy of the former minister of

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fisheries and of this party when we formed the administration. It is the right policy. The inshore fishery is important in the Atlantic provinces, not simply from the point of view of economics, but because of our very settlement and way of life. The inshore fishery and the Atlantic lifestyle are inseparably intertwined. To tamper with one is to undermine the other. That being the case, I ask how is it that there is no money in the small craft harbour budget to build and repair desperately needed wharves and breakwaters? How is it that millions of dollars of Canada Works funds will go unspent because small craft harbours has no budget to complement the Canada Works funds as has been done over the past several years?

This party realized how important shore facilities were, and more than tripled the budget for them in recent years. I have brought this to the attention of the government before and nothing has been done. This is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker. I quote from a recent editorial in the *St. John's Evening Telegram* as follows:

Fishermen are in constant danger of losing not only their industrial property but also their lives, without adequate protection in many harbours.

It goes on to say:

But Newfoundland now does have two cabinet ministers in Ottawa, and they are in key positions in this respect, the Finance and Fisheries portfolios. They have already showed they can use their influence and knowledge to win support from their largely farm and city-oriented colleagues for other marine and related projects, and we hope they can be just as successful in getting action on the inadequacies of our small craft havens.

I echo those sentiments. But in all fairness it is the intransigence of the "Baron of Bay Street", the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens), that is the real difficulty. He has not earned his reputation as "The Slasher" without hard work, Mr. Speaker. Not only has he slashed the public works budget for marine works, he has slashed millions of dollars in the vessel subsidies so that since June no inshore fishermen anywhere in the Atlantic region or Quebec have been able to replace vessels or to build new ones, and this at a time when the Atlantic fishery is more lucrative than ever.

Thanks to the establishment of the 200-mile limit by the previous Liberal government, the fish stocks are rebuilding, the price is good, and fishermen are optimistic. At least they were optimistic until the member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens) got his hands on the tiller. Whatever he is doing, one thing is certain—he is not helping the fishermen. Even his leader has said that there are areas of the Canadian economy which need stimulation. The fishery is one of those, Mr. Speaker. I do not know how we can get that message to the President of the Treasury Board, but I can tell him that fishermen in Atlantic Canada and Quebec are frustrated and angry at the lack of support they are experiencing. I suspect it is true for fishermen and pleasure boat users who need small craft harbours in all areas of Canada. Consultation is fine, but it will not float; you cannot tie your boat to it, and you cannot eat it.

I would suggest to the President of the Treasury Board that he leave the towers of Bay Street and get into Atlantic Canada. If he does, he will find out for himself how disastrous his policies will be for the fishermen in that area. If he goes to Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker, he should take time for a trip on