

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

**The Acting Chairman (Mr. Richard):** Order. When the committee rose at five o'clock an amendment to clause 2, moved by the hon. member for St. John's East, was under consideration.

**Mr. Lundrigan:** Mr. Chairman, first I must congratulate the committee for arriving at a quorum so early this evening. Before the debate was interrupted at five o'clock we were talking about an amendment by my hon. friend from St. John's East regarding the need to reinstate in the bill now before the committee, the government reorganization bill in the name of the right honourable, esteemed and distinguished Prime Minister of Canada, a title which would give fisheries at least the status which it deserves as a priority economic issue in the Canadian nation. In presenting our amendment we have tried to show the importance of marine resources to this nation. When we say "marine resources" perhaps we ought to indicate what that phrase means in terms of the Canadian economy. We are not referring to the need for a minister to protect the cod fishing industry.

We are not referring to the need for a ministry or a fisheries department to protect flatfish or the groundfish industry. We are referring to the need for a spokesman in the House of Commons for everything to do with marine resources.

Most nations of the world, including the Soviet Union, the western European nations, the Scandinavian countries and the Iberian nations recognize marine resources as one of the last great frontiers in the development of their countries. Until the introduction of Bill C-207 we had a fisheries department in Canada which, though lacking in initiative, lacking in spark, in ingenuity and aggression, occupied some kind of prestigious position because the representative of the fisheries department did sit on the front bench and could assume responsibility for answering for the Canadian fishing industry.

It has been our contention that it is necessary for Canada to increase the prestige and the importance of the Department of Fisheries. We do not propose this on a sentimental basis. It is not my intention as a Canadian-parliamentarian and as a representative of a fishing constituency, by and large, to argue that we should have a Department of Fisheries which occupies a top-level role in the Canadian government, on the basis of sentiment or simply to see our east coast and west coast marine areas recognized. It is primarily a consideration based on the fact that marine resources occupy a strategic position in the economy.

My hon. friend from South Shore, who moved an amendment in recent days, suggested that we should first reinstate the Department of Fisheries and keep it as a unique and distinct department. Failing the acceptance of that recommendation we moved an amendment asking that there be a fully-fledged Deputy Minister of Fisheries who could assume the full role of a deputy minister answerable to the House of Commons. That proposal was defeated. I cannot recall exactly how the vote went but I do recall that every supporter of the government voted against the motion. This was unacceptable to the Canadian fishing industry. It was unacceptable to Canadian fish-

[Mr. Speaker.]

ermen. It was an unbelievable response from the "just" Prime Minister of Canada who promised to eliminate regional disparity—and I am talking about the four Atlantic provinces, the eastern part of Quebec and British Columbia.

My hon. friend from St. John's East has moved an amendment which is very simple. It suggests that instead of having a department of the environment under which we have subsumed a number of branches, one of which is fisheries, another of which is ecology, the environment, everything to do with pollution—including the effluent produced by pulp and paper plants and the mercury effluent from various industries, and so on—we have a Fisheries Department which is recognized in the total title. It is suggested that we have a department of fisheries and the environment. I cannot imagine that the government of this nation will not accede to this very simple request that fisheries at least be placed in a recognized position in the Canadian economy.

**An hon. Member:** What about wheat?

**Mr. Lundrigan:** Back in 1957 we had a Department of Fisheries. Someone told me today that the Department of Fisheries gained its true status in 1932 after decades of talk, contemplation and activity by interested people in Canada. Perhaps we might have watered down the issue a little when talking about a Department of Fisheries and Forestry, but now we are taking steps completely to eliminate the Department of Fisheries and to set up a department of the environment which will have to do with all kinds of pollution including, I suppose, pollution caused by thermometer breakage. Last evening on national television I heard a report about so many pounds of mercury being released into the atmosphere as a result of the millions of thermometers which become broken during the course of a year.

• (8:10 p.m.)

I see the President of the Treasury Board, who holds the pursestrings, looking at me, and my hon. friend who spoke about pollution yesterday in Vancouver and wants part of the action is also in the chamber. Hopefully, these esteemed and honourable gentlemen have come into the committee to take part in the debate, and we have no objection to that. Everything having to do with the environment and the quality of life should occupy top priority in government circles today.

If we relegate the fisheries department to the third-grade level, if instead of having a fully-fledged Deputy Minister of Fisheries we are to have an acting deputy minister away down the line who once in a while, when he can get an appointment, is able to talk to the minister, then we should at least have a department of fisheries and the environment. The government cannot argue that this would be confusing or cumbersome because we already have multiple departments, such as the department of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration who also looks after the Wheat Board, or I could refer to the present Department of Fisheries and Forestry.

We suggest that this would be a legitimate reason for accepting our amendment. It would give the fisheries