

Fisheries

proposes to lay upon the table of the House any report or other paper dealing with a matter coming within the administrative responsibilities of the government.

I assume that the point of view taken by the minister is that he is placing on the table of the House under the terms of Standing Order 41(2) a paper which relates to the administrative responsibilities of the government. At the same time, I remember the objection I had on a previous occasion to a minister tabling under the terms of Standing Order 41(2) what in effect would be a ministerial statement. It may be that this is a use of the wrong Standing Order and that another procedure, rather than tabling the document, might be to make a statement. I, of course, do not know what is contained in the document tabled by the minister. If hon. members feel strongly enough about the matter, perhaps we might hold it in abeyance and determine after further examination of the matter whether the minister in due course might be invited either to make a statement on motions or to distribute the statement in some way other than under the terms of Standing Order 41(2).

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FISHERIES

STATEMENT BY MINISTER ON ANNUAL MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, hon. members who are concerned about the future of the fishery in the Northwest Atlantic will know that the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries recently concluded its twenty-third annual meeting in Copenhagen.

There was universal concern about the depletion of fish stocks in the North Atlantic. Canada argued that all species in all areas be harvested on a sustained yield basis. This idea received widespread support. Canada also urged that the coastal state be given first claim on the catch. Iceland supported this concept, but other European countries, while recognizing a measure of preference for the coastal state, were unwilling to admit an unlimited claim on Canada's part.

Actually, when it came to the negotiations in detail, sub area by sub area and species by species, Canada did very well indeed. We were allocated 100 million pounds more fish than we took in 1973. In 1974 we will, therefore, be able to take this additional catch in areas where Canadian fishermen have fished for years and where they will be able to take up an increased quota.

There was a trade-off. The Canadian allocation was reduced in certain other areas where we have not fished in the past and in respect of species like silver hake which Canadian fishermen have not taken in any quantity.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a series of figures which outline, by area and by species, Canadian allocations for 1973 and 1974 together with the total allowable catch for all countries for this year and next. This data indicates that, because Canada is a coastal state, we will be able to expand our fishing effort over the next 18 months.

[Mr. Speaker.]

During the conference an impasse developed between the United States and certain other members of ICNAF concerning the depleted fish stocks in convention waters off the New England coast. The United States proposed an over-all reduction in the fishing effort in the order of 25 per cent. Canada, recognizing both the complexity of the fishery and the need for a further limitation of effort, suggested a special meeting of the commission in September in order to resolve these difficulties. This meeting has now been scheduled.

We have by no means solved all of our difficulties in the North Atlantic but Canada, as the principle coastal state, has gained a great deal. The principle of sustained yield cropping has now been accepted by all members of ICNAF. Also, Canadian fishermen are obtaining a larger share of the over-all catch as a result of these deliberations.

I would like to table the relevant data, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House welcome the statement made by the Minister of Fisheries today concerning the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries. I am sure that the fishermen of Atlantic Canada will be pleased to learn that we were allocated 100 million pounds more fish for 1974 in the ICNAF areas than was the case in 1973. However, these fish must be caught, and from the statistics supplied by the minister's department it is apparent that the annual catch of fish in Atlantic Canada is declining, which is a matter of great concern to the people of our area. In fact, the cumulative landings in the maritime provinces during the first four months of 1973 totalled 133 million pounds. Statistics for the similar period of 1972 were 139 million pounds, and for 1971, 232 million pounds. So it is quite evident that we are in need of the additional protection which I hope the agreement as read by the minister will provide to Atlantic Canada.

I believe that one section of the minister's statement is worth emphasizing, namely, that Canada urged that the coastal state be given first claim on the fish catch, a concept which received the support of Iceland but nevertheless did not receive the over-all support of other European countries. In other words, Iceland is willing to support our position on this matter, and it is regrettable that Canada did not take the same stand when Iceland endeavoured to secure, on September 1, 1972, fishing limits off her country extending 50 miles off the coast.

I also note in the minister's statement that there was a trade-off. He said:

The Canadian allocation was reduced in certain other areas where we have not fished in the past and in respect of species like silver hake which Canadian fishermen have not taken in any quantity.

I cannot help but wonder why this was necessary. I seriously question whether Canadian fishermen will welcome the news that the government has once again made an accommodation with foreign interests by trading away fishing rights which, after all, originally belonged to the fishermen of Atlantic Canada.