

Supply—Fisheries

matter as to what it regards as the best utilization of the Fraser river. The other three parties in this house at various times and in various ways have made it very clear that they believe the greatest service of the Fraser river to the people of British Columbia and to the people of Canada is as the mainstay of the great salmon industry of the west coast.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I am sure all hon. members will understand why the estimates of the Department of Fisheries are of more fundamental interest to me, as a member of parliament, than those of any other department. Although I have never examined the matter statistically, I should think it is probable that a higher proportion of the total number of constituents in my constituency make their living in the fisheries industry than in any other riding in Canada, with the possible exception of the Magdalen islands.

The greatest item in the Newfoundland fishery industry, the historic item, is codfish, which was the first industry in North America and may indeed have brought the Europeans to this continent. There are many people who believe it did, even before the official discovery by Columbus. The Minister without Portfolio, the hon. member for St. John's West, may even have participated in the recent celebration of the first Portuguese visits to St. John's in about the middle of the fifteenth century, although the historical records on this subject are of course incomplete.

My constituents, and I imagine the committee, would be much more interested in my discussing what is going on at the present time than in entering into this interesting historical speculation. I feel, however, there is another matter which does not constitute an historical speculation which the committee may permit me just to mention; and I notice with relief that the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond is not in the house at the moment; because I am going to say that Bonavista is the oldest place in Canada. It was the landfall of Cabot and the beginning of our country, and I am naturally very proud to represent that place in this house.

I am sorry the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources is not here to listen to my plea but I do hope it will not be long before this excellent policy initiated by his predecessors and which he is following will be carried out and that we will have an historic park at Bonavista.

Mr. Cardiff: We are getting sick of that.

Mr. Pickersgill: However, I realize that I am trespassing on the time and possibly on the patience of the committee—

Mr. Cardiff: Certainly on the patience.

Mr. Pickersgill: Well, the hon. gentleman who represents a great fishing riding may not be interested—

Mr. Sinclair: Fishing for votes.

Mr. Pickersgill: —but most of the members of this committee are interested in fisheries.

Mr. Cardiff: Talk about fish then and not about politics.

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps if the hon. gentleman would, on just one occasion in his long and distinguished parliamentary career—

Mr. Sinclair: Question mark.

Mr. Pickersgill: —rise to his feet and make his own speech instead of muttering when other members are speaking, his riding might be represented in a more distinguished way than it has been in the past few years.

Mr. Cardiff: The hon. gentleman does not know how much he has got to know in order to know how little he knows.

Mr. Pickersgill: I suggest the hon. member should use his spare time to submit that sentence of his to grammatical analysis.

I must say, sir, and I apologize to the hon. member who is the senior member for Queens and is now the Minister of Fisheries, that I had intended to begin by congratulating him upon holding this office which I regard as one of the most important offices in the government of Canada, a portfolio I confess I would very much like to hold myself. If the circumstances had been different it might just have been possible that my ambitions would have been realized.

Mr. Nowlan: Were they going to fire you, Jim?

Mr. Sinclair: I am afraid they were.

Mr. Pickersgill: But I want to say that although I have heard and read criticisms of the new minister on the ground that he is a farmer who has never caught a fish, I do not echo those criticisms because I have never been a fisherman myself. I have always up to the present—and I only fail to do so now because the hon. gentleman is himself a farmer and therefore I do not think he can compete very well—concealed on the east coast the fact that over 40 years ago my father was a fish merchant. It is true that he bought the products of lake Manitoba which would not be regarded as fish on the east coast but, like the products of the east coast of Canada, those fish found their market mainly in the United States.

I would like to echo what was said last night by the hon. member for Charlotte and what was said again this morning by my hon.