

*Government Orders*

the Pacific coast, and I had not really stopped to think what life was like for these people.

Before, I often travelled in the Acadian peninsula, in my own province of New Brunswick, in Nova Scotia, around St. Marys Bay, in the Evangéline region of Prince Edward Island and in Newfoundland, but I never stopped to think how attached fishermen were to their line of work. People who want to believe that the proposed amendments to significantly increase fines will meet with opposition from the fishermen are wrong. They are wrong, and I must admit I was both surprised and relieved when during my visit to the Atlantic region, in every community, all the fishermen, all the groups I met showed this tremendous sense of responsibility. Our Canadian fishermen, wherever they are from, are very responsible people.

For instance, last year, quotas for northern cod were reduced. Of course, a number of experienced politicians in this House preferred to put the blame on foreign overfishing outside our waters or even inside Canadian waters, but the fact is that our own fishermen have also been guilty of overfishing. And this fact, together with foreign overfishing, has contributed to the significant decline in fish stocks in our waters. Once our fishermen realize that, if we want to rebuild these stocks and conserve them, we must take the proper steps to do so. My point is that the fishermen do not object to our increasing fines for those who want to plunder our resources and violate our fisheries legislation, because they are responsible people.

• (1630)

They are responsible people who, throughout the Atlantic and Pacific regions, know that unless the government takes clear measures to show its intention to conserve and rebuild these stocks, they will be out.

Why should these people make the sacrifice involved in going through the present perilous situation of the fisheries in the Atlantic Region if the government and Parliament do not support their efforts? And the best way to support our fishermen is to take action to update a law that has not been amended in quite a while.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that you will hear people say that these amendments to the Fisheries Act are not enough. Certainly, we could have waited months or years to develop a consensus within the industry and address

all the evils besetting the fisheries. Of all the provisions in the Act that could be re-examined and amended, we have a series in this bill that will be eliminated because they are no longer relevant, quite simply, to the industry in the present circumstances.

Just because the law as a whole would need additional study does not mean that we should delay adopting these amendments that are an important step towards resource conservation.

[English]

We have to look at what this bill is really all about, what are the highlights of the bill before the House.

In May 1989, recognizing that resource and industry were undergoing dramatic adjustment, the government under the leadership of my predecessor undertook to develop amendments to the Fisheries Act to meet the realities of today's complex fisheries.

The amendments in this bill are urgently needed, and that was the point I was making. It is not because other areas of the bill could also be subjected to amendments that we should refrain from moving now on these urgent amendments. These amendments are urgently needed. As a result, they are specifically focused to provide greater deterrence for fishing violations and for fish habitat offences, and to strengthen the effectiveness of fishery management including the collection of accurate fishing statistics.

I have talked about the increase in fines for fishing violations. We are going to be the country which will have the more stringent fines for fishing violations. It just shows how important we see this issue to be.

In terms of general fishing offences I use as an example what the trawlermen in Canso told me. They talked about illegal dumping of fish at sea. Another example is the misreporting of catch. People would go out to sea and fish for a period of time and then come back and misreport the catch. Today, before these amendments become law, if someone is caught illegally dumping fish at sea in a period when we know the fish are scarce and we have to reduce quotas or if someone is greedy and wants to pick up fish that will pay him more, to dump fish at sea illegally and maybe to bring back a load of fish worth \$50,000 or \$60,000, we will charge him with violating the act for illegal dumping and he will be