

*Private Members' Business*

I think most Canadians are unaware that even though it has been 10 years since the Law of the Sea was signed, with a great deal of fanfare, it has not been ratified. It has been ratified by 53 nations. It requires 60. Only one of the western industrialized nations has ratified it.

We must ask ourselves why have so many nations signed a document and then failed to ratify it?

I will tell you why, Madam Speaker, in very simple language: greed. It is the very same eyes wide open greed that led—and this is why it is criminal—to the wanton destruction of cod stocks, both northern cod and gulf cod, and the Pacific fishery stocks. It is the very same greed and lack of conviction and backbone on the part of regulators which is destroying a renewable resource and is now at work preventing the ratification of the Law of the Sea.

It is in Canada's interest. This House in an emergency debate last night and during the last week heard about the state of fish stocks, heard about a 500-year old industry that has supported a culture, a rural way of life, a value system that has been destroyed in the name of greed. We have not been able to restrain ourselves from squeezing every last convenient quick buck out of a renewable resource and treating Mother Nature like a convenient piece on a monopoly board instead of showing the ocean and the cod stock the respect we ought to have done.

Canadians are now ready to see our government move to ratify the Law of the Sea as another means of rebuilding the cod stocks.

We saw at the last Federation of Canadian Municipalities meeting a resolution supporting all the measures required to restore the cod stocks. That is a conference of every major municipality right across Canada.

Chuck Furey, the Minister of Development for Newfoundland, proposed before the Northern Ministers' Conference in Sudbury just last week a resolution calling on the five provinces attending to support the end of overfishing and the necessary measures to rebuild Canada's cod stocks. Those five ministers unanimously endorsed that position. It is another indication that Canadians are ready to take the tough decisions, the necessary measures to protect this nation's vital resources.

Canada has benefited immeasurably as a result of the Law of the Sea Convention. We have signed it. As a consequence of it, we have been able to declare sovereign rights over 1,290,000 square nautical miles of continental shelf. We have been able to claim the right to manage what is now, with the break-up of the Soviet Union, the largest marine nation in the world, bar none.

This country has the largest marine coastline on the planet earth. There is not even a close second any more with the break-up of the Soviet Union. Surely Canada should lead the charge to see that ratification of the Law of the Sea takes place. We cannot allow the interests of private concerns that want to ensure they continue to be unregulated in their desire to mine the sea bed to prevent this nation from being forward looking, confident and committed to protecting the sea resource.

This motion today is not a motion asking our government to blindly ratify the convention. It is not a motion that calls upon the Government of Canada to rush forward without any consultation with our partners in the G-7 or in the western industrialized world. It does not say that.

It says that in the opinion of this House the government should, for the benefit of Canadian fisheries, urgently take the necessary steps to ratify the international Law of the Sea, and urge other nations to do so in order to reach the 60 signatures required for the Law of the Sea to come into force.

That is what it says. It says Canada should show leadership. Canada, among western nations, should take a leading role and not leave it just to the Third World to ratify the Law of the Sea. It says Canada, which has benefited so immeasurably from this convention, ought now to give something back to the rest of the planet by urging that this convention be ratified.

• (1750)

It is a motion that does not condemn the Government of Canada. It does not call into question the commitment of the Government of Canada. It does not call into question the interests of the Government of Canada. It does not seek to convey one shred of partisan advantage by the proposer, the member for Davenport. It is a motion that is consistent with the integrity of this member who in all his years in this place and his many hours of debate and as many questions put on the floor