

Supply—Fisheries

I think we should also realize that because Japan has acceded to restrictions on their fishing in the North Pacific, they have all also had to accede to restrictions on their fishing in other areas. The justification for drawing arbitrary lines has been that they have accepted restrictions in the North Pacific. For a nation with so large a population and so many problems, the question of fishing is, to them, a very vital one, one in which they have as much interest in conservation as we have.

Item agreed to.

Fisheries research board of Canada—

25. Construction or acquisition of buildings, works, land and equipment, \$2,100,000.

Mr. Howard: Just a few brief words, Mr. Chairman. This is the last vote in the estimates of this department and I think it is rather regrettable that in the whole course of considering, albeit scantily, the estimates of the Department of Fisheries for this fiscal year we have not heard a single, solitary word from the minister except when he made a correction to an erroneous newscast of this morning concerning seal hunting. In view of the important points put on the record so very ably by my hon. friend from Comox-Alberni, and also the important question just dealt with by the hon. member for Okanagan-Revelstoke concerning the relationship of the Soviet Union with the North Pacific treaty, it seems regrettable, shameful, a rather shoddy treatment of parliament and a rather callous disregard for the fishermen of this nation, for the Minister of Fisheries to sit, silent during consideration of these estimates.

In the last few years, we have seen the Department of Fisheries treated as a sort of orphan of government. On one occasion not too long ago the marine and fisheries committee made a recommendation to the house that the fisheries estimates be referred to it for study. Because of the intervention of the government, that committee report was never acted upon. Because of the approach of cabinet to the then chairman of the committee, the matter was sidetracked, indicating at that time a disregard for the desirability of considering fisheries as fully as we might.

During the current session, within the last two or three weeks we have seen on two or three occasions, to my mind, an attempt by government to push through the estimates of the Department of Fisheries without any debate. There has been an attempt to stifle

[Mr. Johnston.]

consideration of these departmental estimates by the government at the very time when the delegation from the United Fishermen and Allied Workers of America were buttonholing members in the corridors and presenting their problems to them. This indicates an absolute disinterest on the part of the government, a sort of thumbing of its nose at the delegation.

Incidentally, we have seen this proposal not only emanate from the government side, but supported by the Conservative party. I say it is a shame—

Mr. Vincent: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Howard: I am telling my hon. friend what the attitude of the Conservative party was on two occasions to the estimates of the Department of Fisheries within the last two or three weeks. It was an attitude of: Let us get the fisheries estimates through without any discussion. On two occasions that has been the approach, which is a shameful commentary on both these two old parties. This is their attitude to a department which is vital, and of much concern to the welfare of fishermen on both coasts, as well as in other areas of Canada.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I hope more than anything else that when the next fiscal year starts, and I say this now because we are almost at the end of the consideration of the past year's estimates, that the Department of Fisheries' estimates will be included in the first supply motion. I hope that they will be referred to the fisheries committee for examination. I hope that when the committee looks into these matters that it will give an opportunity to people interested, to private citizens, to appear before it and express their views.

Mr. Crouse: Before the hon. minister answers the hon. member for Skeena, I want to say one or two words to impress upon him that although there are many issues that could be raised by hon. members of the Conservative party with respect to last year's estimates, in keeping with our desires to expedite the passing of these estimates we have refrained from debating them at any length at this time.

I would ask the minister if, when next year's estimates come before the house, he would give them priority and place this department high on the list so that it may be assured of early study. I ask this in view of