

Adjournment Debate

However, I think it is important to emphasize once again that in marine rescues the prime function of the Department of National Defence is the co-ordination of activities through the rescue co-ordination centres. In each of the recent marine incidents on the east coast mentioned by the hon. member the rescue co-ordination centre has responded promptly, as soon as it was made aware that vessels were in distress.

I am certain that the hon. member is aware that it is primarily vessels from other government departments and agencies which are used for marine rescue. A number of these vessels are on continuous patrol throughout the Canadian east coast area, and they are prepared to assist immediately, on notice.

There are also a number of vessels belonging primarily to the Ministry of Transport based at various harbours of Newfoundland, whose prime function is marine search and rescue.

Although my department's main responsibility and primary function is the co-ordination of marine search, we also provide an air search capability, but we can only do that whenever weather conditions make this possible. A review of events in the past three rescue attempts shows that the search by air was delayed on two occasions by weather, and on one occasion by darkness. The fact that the aircraft were based at Summerside had no bearing on the time they joined the search.

As I mentioned before, Canadian Forces Base Summerside appears to be the optimum location for search aircraft as it is the hub of the area of responsibility. In a previous adjournment debate the details of the search for the vessel *San Juan* were recorded in *Hansard* for February 26, 1976, and a review of events of that search will show that the department's rescue co-ordination centre acted in a prompt and responsible manner, as it has on many previous occasions.

I believe that the hon. member will agree with the statement made recently in the House by the Minister of State (Fisheries) (Mr. LeBlanc) when he was speaking of the Department of National Defence and of the work of the Ministry of Transport in search and rescue. He said that on many occasions these departments have helped and have in fact saved lives. I hope that that will be recognized and reflected back to the constituents of the hon. member. I should like him to look more often at the times airmen have gone out in adverse weather conditions and have in fact achieved rescues, rather than point out—I know it is his main responsibility to do so but unfortunately it does not reflect favourably or fairly on some Canadian forces personnel—those times when we are unable to effect a rescue. On average the work of our Canadian forces is, I think, of a very high standard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.28 p.m.