

*Marine Resources Development Study*

of some countries that have been traditionally hosts in our waters are making headway and that many agreements have already been signed with these countries whereby they accept to withdraw from our waters beginning in 1978 or 1980.

• (1640)

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government's position at this Conference on the Law of the Sea could be outlined, but I believe that other hon. members are very anxious to expound their views on the motion brought forward by the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), which has allowed us to show up the federal government's policy.

Much has been left undone, as I said before. However, I believe the Canadian government has adopted a positive stance and is aware that our fisheries must be protected so that our economy, our fishermen and Canadian citizens who derive a livelihood from this industry may continue to support their families in this way, and that action must be taken which, while it may sometimes seem drastic, is in the best interest of Canadians and Canada.

**Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on the motion of the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) and as my colleague from Bonaventure-Îles de la Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) gave such a good start to the debate on fisheries, which are one of our main resources in eastern Canada, I should also like to continue in the same vein.

As the hon. member has indicated, the government has taken many steps to protect our coastal waters and show that Canadians are interested in Canada's continental shelf. This country is ahead of many others in this field.

It is well known by all that many problems arise both on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts with respect to mineral and marine resources development.

The province of Quebec and, as was pointed out earlier by the mover of this motion, that of Nova Scotia have been exploring the marine subsoil for several years in the hope of finding oil. Those provinces want to derive high revenues, some day, from offshore oil fields. However, if there were revenues to be obtained, a conflict was to be expected between provincial and federal jurisdictions concerning offshore rights.

The federal government took the lead and offered to share with the provinces any revenues which might be derived from offshore mining. This may be the best way to solve the conflict, since under present conditions, particularly where regional economic expansion is concerned, the Canadian government levies even higher taxes from the have provinces to distribute them to the have-not provinces of the Atlantic and Quebec.

Therefore, if revenues have to be shared between the have and the have-not provinces, any revenues that might be derived from offshore mining in Canada will have to benefit all Canadians and all provinces.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the motion before us is to allow the federal government to maintain on a national scale a long term and well coordinated program for the collection and use of our coastal water resources. The

[Mr. Béchard.]

federal government must continue its research operations aiming at the maximum utilization of the resources along the Canadian shore line. But as always the scientists' first priority must be the protection of our environment. In fact, the hon. member mentioned this in his motion.

At the annual meeting of the National Council of Marine Leagues in Canada which was held in Ottawa on April 14, 1972, Mr. A. W. May from the Department of the Environment made a speech on the conservation and protection of our marine resources, and his introduction is worthy of mention. Mr. Way stated, and I quote:

• (1650)

[English]

The wholesome sea is at her gates, her gates both east and west.

The wholesomeness of the sea was taken for granted when J. A. Ritchie's words were inscribed in the stone above the main entrance to the centre block of our Parliament Buildings some fifty years ago, but is now a matter of some concern. Expressions of this concern from a wide variety of sources have resulted in widespread public awareness and sympathy for the problem but, perhaps inevitably, there is some backlash and a feeling in some quarters that the problems are overstated and overemphasized. I suggest that they are not. Although I may be preaching to the converted in this forum, I hope I will at least leave hon. members with a more detailed appreciation of the problems we face in protecting the marine environment and its resources, and the attitudes and actions of the Canadian government in meeting these problems.

With the exception of a very narrow strip adjacent to coastlines, the oceans have never belonged to anybody. Their use for various purposes has been free to all, and the concept of freedom of the seas is a very old one in international law. This freedom has traditionally included freedom for ship navigation and overflights, freedom to use the sea bed for cable laying, freedom to fish and freedom to conduct military operations. As the nations of the world look more and more to the sea as a source of minerals and of protein, as well as a convenient place to get rid of domestic and industrial wastes, it has become apparent that the old concept of freedom of the seas includes freedom to pollute and freedom to overfish and must be called into question.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, on account of that freedom to pollute our waters and to overfish on the continental shelf, as Mr. May so well pointed out in his statement, eastern Canada is faced with a serious problem: commercial overfishing by certain countries in the North Atlantic.

North Atlantic salmon catches have been decreasing alarmingly in the last few years. The number of catches, in commercial as well as in sport fishing, decreased by 45 per cent in 1971 compared to previous years.

The federal and provincial governments have been worried for many years about such a decrease and many people expressed their opinion about that.

Following years of studies of our coastal waters and of the eastern continental shelf, it was discovered that such a decrease was due to commercial overfishing in the North