

Government Orders

Mr. Boyer: This is the egocentric version of Canadian history.

Mr. Simmons: But I should tell him—

Mr. Boyer: There was another speech.

Mr. Simmons: Ah, ah, now the member has made that global leap that he is known for. I said two things: I said I made a speech and I said the government fell. He jumped to that silly and wrong conclusion, Madam Speaker, of thinking one affected the other. That is the kind of mistake he often makes and we forgive him for it, especially since it is so near the Christmas season.

I want to tell him about another speech. It was in the Newfoundland House of Assembly. My friend who is now in the Senate, Senator Doody, was the Minister of Finance and it was my honour to be his critic, in opposition. I was to do the lead-off speech, as I am doing here today, on another matter. It was thought needful at the time to talk at some length. I managed to talk for 16 hours and 42 minutes. So I have been known to give powerful speeches and long ones and, if the member will tell me which he wants today, I will accommodate him.

Mr. Boyer: There is so little time and so much to do, why don't you make it a short, powerful speech.

Mr. Simmons: I shall take the advice of my friend from Toronto. I am struggling to remember the name of his riding.

Mr. Boyer: Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

An hon. member: If you have a memory problem, that is not his fault.

Mr. Simmons: The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, apart from being a man who makes mistakes, also is a man of great ideas and he just gave me one. He said that I ought to be short and powerful. I make him a commitment that I will keep at least one of those undertakings. Since my younger son is probably by now waiting in the lobby to go off to the Christmas party, I shall see that it is short and leave it to him to decide whether it was powerful.

Despite the need for brevity, I have a couple of things I would like to say. One of them is that I am absolutely appalled at the way this government is treating the fishery. The Atlantic fishery is what I want to talk about specifically because I know more about it than I do about the Pacific fishery, although my friends, the hon. member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, the hon. mem-

ber for Cardigan and I are making some efforts to get our heads together on that issue as well. We three are the critics in this party for the fisheries issues. But let me stay with the Atlantic fisheries because it is something I know a little more about.

We live in a time of unprecedented crisis in the Atlantic fishery from foreign overfishing, from the depletion of the northern cod stocks through some miscalculations by the scientists three or four years ago, from the erosion of the Gulf stocks, and from the complete collapse of the inshore fishery on most of our coasts, particularly in Newfoundland.

Mr. Dionne: And the incompetence of the minister.

Mr. Simmons: All of those reasons we understand in some measure. What we do not understand is the government's approach to the problem.

When the present Minister of Fisheries, whom I have a lot of respect for, came into the ministry, I had great hopes for him and his ability to deal with the issue. I still do, given his competence, his track record in cabinet before, and his passion. I like somebody who has a bit of passion in any job, the kind of passion that the minister of energy exhibits. He tries to hide it most of the time but it beats just underneath and it comes through once in a while. Whether it shows or not, it dictates his actions. That is what encourages me. The same can be said about the gentleman who is the Minister of Fisheries. He engages his commitments with a passion, also with a right mind.

The minister's lieutenant, the member for St. John's East, is no amateur either when it comes to passion or intelligence. He might not agree because he is too modest a man. A good team, I say seriously. A good team. If that crowd has to be in the government—and I have serious problems with that—then I am delighted that the Minister of Fisheries and his parliamentary secretary are the gentlemen who are responsible for fisheries. Together they have the brains and the commitment to do something about the problem.

That being the case, why is something not happening? Part of the answer has to be that these guys got their marching orders, or to put it differently, got their orders not to march. They got their orders not to do anything. They got their orders to keep their feet as though planted in cement, to be motionless in achieving any results as far as the fisheries are concerned.