

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

drawn further in toward the coast, this would be nothing short of a betrayal of the legitimate interests and rights of the fishing industry on the Pacific coast.

The important thing, though, is to move quickly to preserve what little is left to ourselves, and to prevent nations with large fishing fleets, such as Japan and the Soviet Union, claiming historic fishing rights in these areas.

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries): First, perhaps I should say emphatically that the government has no intention of backing away from the straight base line approach to the delineation of our fishing areas as outlined in the legislation in 1964.

In the question which the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) raised yesterday, he asked what action was being taken by the government to ensure that the Soviet Union does not establish historic fishing rights in the waters along our Pacific coast. I should like to make it clear to the hon. member and to the fishing industry in British Columbia that the Canadian government has been endeavouring to ensure that the Soviet Union does not establish historic fishing rights in waters along the west coast which are vital to our fishery. This is being done largely by exclusion. For example there has been no fishing by Russian fishing vessels within our Canadian fishing zones. By Canadian fishing zones I mean zones within 12 miles of the Canadian coastline. The Russians have been observing our 12 mile limit so there can be no question of the U.S.S.R. establishing historic fishing rights.

In recent years there have been several isolated incidents where the presence of Russian fishing vessels has been noticed in Dixon entrance. On each occasion they have left the area after being warned by our fishery patrol vessels that they were in Canadian waters. Those of us who have been watching this situation closely have, of course, been concerned as to the nature as well as the location of these Soviet fishing operations. From all accounts—and this has been verified by our own fisheries protection service—the Soviet fishing operations have been limited to catching groundfish species for which we have yet to develop a large commercial market on the west coast.

There has been no evidence, I repeat, no evidence, that the Soviet vessels are catching species which are of major interest to our fishing industry today, namely, salmon, halibut and herring. In other words, the Russians have not been establishing historic fishing rights off our west coast; they have not been fishing in Canadian fishing zones, nor have they been catching the species in which we are most interested today.

The hon. member expressed concern about our relation with the United States in connection with fishing zones. My understanding is that the fishery on our west coast is more vital and seems to have more strength than does the United States fishery on the west coast. To the extent that we have reciprocal fishing rights with the United States and can fish in their waters as they can in ours, we are gaining relative to them, and to the total fishing operation off the coast.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.21 p.m.
