

Fishing Industry

take action to solve the problems within the fishing industry. Indeed, we are expecting a decision on the east and west coasts licensing problems, the allocation decision on the fleet in British Columbia, a greater contribution to research and enforcement in the fishing industry of British Columbia, and expecting them to implement—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Miller: I thank hon. members. I will not be very long. Decisions have been delayed for three years while we have gone through election after election. Decisions must be made in order to save the salmon resource in British Columbia. They must also be made to save salmon streams, trout streams, and the environment right across this land. We expect the government to act immediately on these recommendations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Fleming).

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: What do you know about fish?

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State, Multiculturalism): Mr. Speaker, this early skepticism from the other side will soon be felled. They forget too soon my year and a half as the parliamentary secretary.

I rise to speak to this motion on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc). He regrets he is not able to participate in this debate, but he does not apologize. Today and tomorrow the minister is in the home province of the previous speaker and mover of this motion, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni (Mr. Miller), meeting with regional fisheries officials, members of his advisory committee, and the salmonid enhancement board.

The minister does not apologize for his absence from this chamber because he not only advised the mover of this motion of his plans to travel to British Columbia, he sought his views, and those of all members of Parliament from that province, on measures that should be taken to alleviate some of the problems currently facing the west coast fishing industry. Indeed, the minister was grateful to have received valuable input from the hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni and, despite the incongruity of the motion before us, has asked me to thank the hon. member for his contribution.

The minister originally planned to be in British Columbia last week. However, pressing business in this House kept him, and virtually all other members, in Ottawa. It seemed logical, and indeed fair to those who were expecting to meet with him, for the minister to reschedule his trip as quickly as possible. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni, however, was not prepared to await the outcome of that visit before condemning this government for what he calls "its failure to support the Canadian fishing industry". I suggest he should have exercised a little patience.

Personally, I am honoured to speak on the minister's behalf. I may represent a Toronto riding, but you do not have to live next door to the ocean to appreciate the value of the fishing industry to this nation's economy, or to be aware of the sense of well being and security its success over the past number of years has brought to so many Canadians on the east and west coasts. In fact, I have had the privilege of serving as parliamentary secretary to the minister. This experience afforded me the opportunity of learning about Canada's fishing industry and to work with the minister and departmental officials. I learned of the long, often turbulent, history of the Canadian fishery and witnessed the dedication and commitment of the minister and his officials.

We on this side of the House welcome this debate and the opportunity it affords us to put a number of facts on the record. We are proud of the recent growth of the Canadian fishing industry and believe that growth has been partly due to the policies and commitment of this government.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that an added benefit of the minister's long-standing commitment to visit British Columbia and his inability to be in the House today, is that it allows me, on behalf of my party, to salute him for his unfaltering support for, and belief in, Canadian fishermen.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fleming: Since taking on the awesome portfolio in 1974, the hon. member for Westmorland-Kent has worked selflessly, indeed sometimes stubbornly, in the interests of Canadian fishermen. I say fishermen intentionally, for the minister recognized from his earliest days in that portfolio and consequently educated the rest of us to the fact that his prime responsibility was to the men and women who make their living from the resources of our oceans.

He has been relentless in his efforts to encourage fishermen to organize and achieve a strong voice in the management of their own affairs. His goal has been to ensure the industry can provide its participants with a respectable living and security, and to guarantee that never again would being a fisherman be considered a second-class occupation. I suggest that the vision and commitment of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has gone a long way in the revitalization of the Canadian fishing industry and the pride now so evident in its participants.

Perhaps the hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni is too young to remember the state of the Canadian fishery in the early 1970s. Let me remind him. It was in a state of disaster. The industry was in such bad shape that many thought it could not recover. Indeed, over a three-year period it took the injection of \$130 million by the people of Canada to keep the fishery from irrevocable collapse.

Prior to the declaration of the 200-mile zone in 1977, the problem was simple. There were not enough fish. That challenge was met and stocks were allowed to rebuild. This was achieved through strict management measures introduced by the government, such as annual fishing plans. These plans, which are still in effect today, are established on the basis of scientific advice provided by government biologists and take