

Adjournment Debate

parliamentary secretary was tragically forced to return home to his riding this evening to attend a funeral.

• (1915)

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans informs me that he has not yet received the final report from the independent review panel created to assess the new scientific information on the northern cod stock. The interim report was received mid-May.

Early in 1989 there were serious changes in our view of the northern cod resource. New scientific data and more sophisticated assessment techniques led the Canadian scientists to believe that the total cod resource available was significantly smaller than previously thought. Although we still believe that the stock increased in weight between 1976 and 1986 it tripled rather than increased five-fold as had been estimated by the Canadian Atlantic Fisheries Scientific Advisory Committee in 1987. This is also a slower increase than estimated by the task force group on the Newfoundland inshore fishery in 1987.

In response to this unexpected information the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans revised immediately the 1989 total allowable catch down from 235,000 tonnes as a precautionary measure from the preliminary figure of 266,000 tonnes. This level ensured for 1989 the conservation of stock at its recent level.

The conclusions of our scientists and of Dr. Harris' panel will have a significant impact on management measures in the future. Northern cod is vitally important to the livelihood and future of thousands of fishermen and plant workers and to the viability of the Atlantic groundfish industry in general. It is for that reason that a comprehensive examination of all possible facts which may affect the state of the northern cod resource is very important at this stage. We cannot afford leaving any stone unturned at such a crucial time.

The independent review panel which is chaired by Dr. Harris from Memorial University of Newfoundland was instructed to conduct a comprehensive examination of all possible factors which may affect the state of the northern cod resource, of the data used in establishing scientific advice and of the methods used to determine this advice. The panel was given a broad mandate to ensure that reliable scientific advice will be available to manage the fishery in 1990 and beyond.

As members will be aware, the interim report of the panel was delivered on May 15, 1989 and confirmed the lower size of the stock. During the summer the panel received submissions from the public and held public hearings. This public debate was an important element of the review and the panel is now finalizing its report. The final report from the panel will be made public after a review by the minister and appropriate consultation. Also, as is normally the case, consultation with the fishing industry will take place at a special meeting of the Atlantic Groundfish Advisory Committee and a meeting of the Atlantic Council of Provincial Fisheries Ministries.

FISHERIES

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that frustration was felt by the Liberal member who spoke about there being no Atlantic representative here for the government to answer. I appreciate having heard on northern cod but my colleague from Newfoundland spoke on foreign overfishing.

I am speaking on an area that I think has to be answered. I asked in October what kind of help there was going to be for the communities of Lockeport, Digby, Argyle and the many thousands of people who are out of work since last June. The minister at that time has no response.

He says there will be assistance coming and it has not come. There is no direct assistance that I have seen come into Nova Scotia in the form of helping the community. It is not financial assistance that people want. They want to fish in Nova Scotia. Those coastal communities want a living. It is not like the Prime Minister said here in the House today, that the future in Atlantic Canada is bright. Perhaps the future in Atlantic Canada is bright, but I have lived by the sea all my life, and fish are a natural resource that this government will deal with to come forward with a plan of action that will secure the prosperity of the Atlantic coast.

There are three areas where this government fails. One is a management plan.

• (1920)

In my supplementary question to the minister in October, I said please transfer from the offshore some of the species that they will not use in those coastal communities near Lockeport, Digby, and Argyle, all are 4BWX and 5. He said no at that time. Yet his own official