

Adjournment Debate

Cariboo and Lismore and areas such as these, where there has been terrible damage and many fishermen have lost practically everything they have. Salmon nets can be very expensive, as much as \$4,000. Lobster traps these days also are very expensive, probably as much as \$10 to \$12. As the acting minister of fisheries of Nova Scotia pointed out:

... without equipment, the fishermen have no means of support and no means by which to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits next winter.

Again, in the Lismore area the storm had another deleterious effect. It worsened an already intolerable situation by driving in kelp and silting up access wharves and harbours adjacent to very busy fish processing factories. Well over 100 people have been affected by this. This is just one example where help is very obviously needed. Surely when there is such a need we can expect, and have a right to expect, quick action. Admittedly there are areas of policy in international negotiations on offshore fisheries and in research and development where the minister can justifiably say that he needs time and must proceed carefully; but in an instance such as this the inshore fishermen of Atlantic Canada are entitled to quick answers. Again I call on the minister to do something appropriate and to do it soon.

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment and Fisheries): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay) said, considerable loss has been suffered by fishermen in the Maritime provinces and in Newfoundland as the result of a prolonged storm in June. The federal fisheries service, in co-operation with various provincial fisheries services, has been attempting to assess the extent and nature of this damage.

● (2220)

I have some information here which indicates in a general way the nature of loss to the lobster fishery. Looking at area 7B, which covers Prince Edward Island, Cape

Breton, and mainland Nova Scotia—at least, parts of each of them—the ratio of loss is one trap per four set. In other words, the typical fisherman lost 25 per cent of his gear. In areas 6A, 6B, 7A and 7B, covering Cape Breton, mainland Nova Scotia, and District 5, the eastern shore, the ratio was one in three, or a 33½ per cent loss. Area 7C, interestingly enough, did not suffer any loss.

Some small lobster boats were damaged and certain fish traps were lost. There is some difficulty in coming up with final figures, because it is taking the fishermen themselves time to find out exactly what their losses are and to price these losses. So we do not have final figures in dollar terms.

We certainly have not settled on a formula for paying the losses or meeting the expense as between levels of government. The federal government does insure fishing vessels. In respect to losses, automatically the fishing vessel insurance program looks after losses of this kind.

When it comes to the matter of gear, up until a few years ago the federal government did have a gear insurance program. It failed largely because many fishermen refused to pay the premiums. Of course, all benefited whenever there was a severe storm and the government had to get into the act and pay for lost gear. But the scheme was self-defeating and it ceased to exist in 1971.

The hon. member mentioned the Emergency Measures Organization. There is a general formula whereby, if losses run to many millions of dollars in any sector of the economy, the provinces involved can appeal to the federal government and, over a certain threshold, the federal government pays an increasing proportion of the expense. In any case we have now got most of the data, and we expect to have all the necessary cost information within the next week or so. We still have to resolve the question of which level of government pays the compensation and in what amount.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.24 p.m.