

Supply

• (1140)

While it sounds good to say that we are not going to allow one foreign vessel to fish, we would suffer badly if we did not have reasonable arrangements that are in the Canadian national interests. That is the answer to this foreign fishing vessel allegation within the 200-mile limit.

An hon. member: A supplementary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please. I need some clarification because the question and comments period extension given earlier is not an eternal extension.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in hearing the minister respond to the member for Davenport in terms of extending the 200-mile limit.

The minister acknowledged that there may come the time when in fact he will do what we are asking him to do this morning. I am just wondering when that time will be, when in fact the time and the need could not have been greater than today and now to do exactly that in protection of those stocks and in the best interests of our own national interests.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, that is of course a matter of very, very great importance yet to be decided.

The timing would have to be when we have concluded that we have the best chance of taking such action successfully, because a very substantial proportion of the international community has been lead to the conclusion that this is the sensible and reasonable thing for Canada to do and that it should get support. That is when we should take further unilateral action, if the present methods that we are now pursuing are unsuccessful.

I cannot give any exact time, but that is the best answer that can be made. The time is not yet, but in my opinion we do not have an awful lot of time that we can wait further. I cannot quantify that.

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, I think it has been a very interesting and informative morning and a very important discussion.

The courtesy and the co-operation shown by all members present in extending this question period, for example, shows that we can work together in our common interests and the common interests of Canadians when we are all convinced that is the correct way in which to handle the current situation.

It is commendable and I hope some people who are quick to criticize politicians will note that it is not always that way. While this will not be reported because it is not the sort of thing that will make headlines, at least we here know and those who happen to be watching at this time will know as well.

It is a pity the government could not accept this as anything other than a non-confidence motion. Certainly if there is any blame to be attached, then it is blame that should be attached to any party that was the government of Canada at any time in the last 12 years.

This is not a new situation that started the day before yesterday. It has been the situation since 1980 and the Harris report showed that the foreigners have been overfishing their quota every year since 1980 except for one year.

So it is nothing new. There is nothing new about this particular situation that is described in this resolution. When the Liberals were in office, they could not or did not do anything about it. The Tories have been in office for eight years and they could not or have not done anything about it to date. So much for the Liberals and the Conservatives.

The New Democrats have not been in office, but at least in 1987 in a federal convention we passed a resolution urging the government to take all necessary action to extend our authority beyond the 200-mile zone with respect to the nose and tail of the Grand Banks so that we could manage that resource properly.

Since then, our leader in 1989, speaking in the House on behalf of the New Democrats, made the same argument. Again, during the emergency debate of about two weeks ago, she advanced that position on behalf of the New Democrats.

We have been consistent. In our case, the difference is that we have not had the opportunity yet as a government to implement what we believe and what everyone speaking here today has said must be done—to take control of that resource beyond the 200-mile limit when that is necessary to actually manage the resource.

The resolution lays all the blame on foreign overfishing. There has been some discussion already that there are some other factors. For example, the minister mentioned seals. I have mentioned them ever since I was in Newfoundland in 1990 and had listened to a lot of fishermen and fishing companies. I heard from a lot of people the problems of the diminishing cod stocks.