

N.W. Atlantic Fisheries Convention Act

territorial seas seriously since among other things this directly affects the livelihood of so many of our people. We have asked that the government use National Defence facilities to enforce the laws of Canada in this area. We have asked that the government recommend quotas to the various nations which are engaged in harvesting our resources. I understand that the Soviet Union, for example, is willing to talk about quotas, to talk about restricting catches and the number of boats and the amount of gear which may be employed. After all, Russia too has been getting an increasingly small return on the total capital and technology invested in its fishing fleet. Indeed, they are getting an even smaller return per man-hour than we are.

The simple fact is that Canadians are not willing to give the fisheries any degree of priority. The reason is, I believe, that when many people think of Canada they think only of the central heartland, of the Montreal-Toronto complex. They think of a power structure which is basically in tune with manufacturing industries, and I do not think they are prepared to lift a finger which might upset the delicate international balance which presently exists. They certainly are not prepared to lift a finger on behalf of our fisheries.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Various North and South American and European nations are launching new initiatives in the area of marine resources, which is one of our great frontiers of resource development. But Canada has crawled into a shell in this regard. I say, as I have said before, that as long as we have the present incumbent in charge of the External Affairs Department, a man with the backbone of a marinated herring, we will not have any action with regard to marine resources. If you were to read the proclamations of the minister of external affairs, Mr. Speaker, you would find that he wrote off fisheries as early as 1952 as a poverty endeavour. He never took the trouble to enlighten himself on the fact that this is one of our great frontiers of Canadian development, an area that could pay dividends to the nation as a whole.

The Minister of Fisheries has not heard a word I have said because he has been talking to his colleagues. This is an indication of his interest in fisheries. He is conducting a slow but deliberate policy of withdrawal from the fisheries into the more sophisticated area of environmental control, air pollution, cleaning up the Eddy match factory and the sewage emptying from the Prime Minister's residence on Sussex Drive. He has taken on this new image of Mr. Clean. We do not even get the response we used to get to the mail we send the Minister of Fisheries. He is now too busy acting as the big brother in the Canadian cabinet. He has no more time for the fisheries.

If the minister wants to enjoy a healthy political life in this House of Commons, he had better change his attitude. We have lots of time to discuss the plight of the fishermen of Canada, and whether this government likes it or not we will get the government to take action that

benefits the fishermen. That is, if the government wants to conduct the business of this House in a sane and satisfactory manner. The Minister of Fisheries should listen to people who know something about the fisheries, such as the hon. member for St. John's East and other of my colleagues from the Atlantic provinces. When they make recommendations to the Minister of Fisheries, he should listen damn carefully and try to encourage his colleagues, the flower-powered Prime Minister and the fellow who sits to his right to do likewise.

He should imbue these men with a knowledge of fisheries and impress upon them the importance of our marine resources. Let him keep them on their toes so that we have some action. We are becoming a little disillusioned at the responses of this government in the area of marine resources. It is time the government, which is interested in a just society, dished a little of it out to the fishermen of Canada in all our provinces.

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): Mr. Speaker, my intervention will be very short. This is the last day of the session before Easter and I learned of this measure an hour or so ago. I agree with what the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) and the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan) have said and I have no wish to repeat it.

This bill is a step in the right direction, something which as far as I am concerned we need. Other members have talked about depletion of our fisheries. I am concerned about what we do if certain countries fail to participate in this convention. How will we be able to control their activities in this field? I should like to know how many nations are contracting parties to this convention. If I understood the minister correctly, the agreements have not yet been signed but are about to be signed. I think every effort should be made to see that at least the ICNAF nations sign agreements; but those countries who are not party to ICNAF should also be made aware of the convention and be asked to participate in it.

There is no question that the Canadian government should afford protection to our inshore fishermen as well as to our offshore fishermen. Much concern has been expressed recently about herring stocks, for example. A few years ago an international convention was held in Fredericton which was attended by many scientists. I know scientists are wrong sometimes and therefore I do not criticize them, but most people who attended this convention predicted that the herring stocks off the Atlantic coast would never be depleted. Encouragement was given to produce herring meal and all kinds of plans were made to harvest herring in one form or another.

Now we find that some of the herring processing plants are having to close three years after this convention. Obviously something has gone wrong. In addition, other parts of the fishery that use herring meal have been affected. Fish that feed on herring are now less plentiful. In my province we hold a tuna fishing contest for the tourists every year, but in the last two years there have been no tuna to fish because of the herring shortage.

[Mr. Lundrigan.]