

Government Organization Act, 1970

stage. We must also secure agreement not to fish for salmon on the high seas.

I believe most of these problems can be worked out, especially between Canada and the United States with whom we share similar views in respect to the conservation and ownership of fisheries resources. But these matters call for greater attention from the Canadian government than is presently being given to them. They call for action by the Department of External Affairs, which to date has not shown the required interest in our thorny fishing problems.

In fact, I believe that the international aspect of the fishing industry will in the next few years become more complicated, more demanding of both government and industry, than has been the case in the past.

• (3:30 p.m.)

Canada, for example, puts great stock in the next Law of the Sea conference. I hope—and I know I express the hope of the entire fishing industry of Canada—that this conference will result in agreement that the coastal states should have jurisdiction over and responsibility for the management of the fisheries resources of the continental shelf and slope. I also hope that the conference will produce agreement to ban high seas fishing for salmon.

There will be a considerable time lag between the Law of the Sea conference meetings and the time its decisions will be accepted into international law, and during that time there will be bilateral and multilateral discussions and agreements which will be absolutely necessary in order to deal with the urgent problems of conservation and national interest.

Some of our stocks, as I mentioned previously, are already in trouble—stocks of groundfish such as haddock, herring, hake, yellowtail and redbfish. To lose these species due to government delay in implementing conservation measures at the international level is frustrating and frightening to our fishermen. Even more frustrating is the known fact that our salmon stocks are wide open to foreign exploitation on the high seas.

I believe that we must have a thoughtful and co-ordinated approach to international fisheries matters. I believe this calls for planning, for expertise in fisheries and in carrying out negotiations. I believe these problems call for the full-time attention of an adequate number of highly trained people. At the moment we have a three-man international section in the fisheries department which I understand is fully occupied representing Canada in some of the nine international conventions to which we belong and in handling the day to day paper work relating to international agreements. We have a deputy minister and an assistant deputy minister in that department who devote part of their time to international commissions. The Department of External Affairs has a three-man team in its legal section assigned to fisheries matters, but not all their time is devoted to this subject. Obviously, this is not enough. The field being covered has grown so fast that the limited number of personnel cannot do justice to their work.

[Mr. Crouse.]

It is for these reasons that the hon. member for St. John's East has moved his amendment, and it is for these reasons that I support the amendment. If in the past, the staffs of the fisheries department and the Department of External Affairs have not been able to bring about agreement or to bring to fruition some of the conventions established by the 1958 Law of the Sea conference; they have not been able to establish the regulations drawn up in the 1964 Fishing Zones and Territorial Sea regulations passed by this House. We have been unable to get any action from the existing staffs of the Department of External Affairs and the fisheries department. Therefore, I ask the minister how we can expect to have any action taken at this time, having regard to the law of diminishing returns with which we are faced in this regard. We are seeing less attention given to the fishing industry at a time when its problems are mounting and it requires more, not less, attention.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I urge the minister to give careful consideration to the amendment that has been moved, for I believe that by accepting it this government will be consistent in its thinking on this bill.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, for the main remarks that I wish to make on third reading of this bill I prefer to wait until the present amendment has been dealt with. However, since the amendment is before us I should like to indicate our support for it. It may be that what we are requesting is just a bit of tokenism, but sometimes even tokenism can be significant.

The amendment before us asks, in slightly different words, for the same thing that we asked for in our amendment at committee of the whole stage last night. The government has agreed to designate the Minister of the Environment as Minister of Fisheries for Canada. It is understood that there is to be an assistant deputy minister of fisheries. We think there is a missing link and that things ought not to stay that way. We think there ought to be a deputy minister of fisheries and that it is appropriate also to designate the deputy minister of the environment as deputy minister of fisheries. Therefore, when the vote is called on this amendment we shall vote for the amendment.

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I rise briefly to support the amendment put forward by my colleague for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). I support it basically for the same reason as he. The fishing industry is vital to a large segment of our population. Indeed, in the province of Newfoundland alone, approximately 25 per cent of the population are directly affected by the fishing industry. Therefore I commend my colleague and support his endeavour to have a deputy minister named for the new department.

I realize that a concession has been made in that in the first instance it was not the government's intention to have a Minister of Fisheries in the new department. However, I am not quite satisfied thus far. Like my colleagues, I fear that by passing this bill the fishing industry of Canada, especially of eastern Canada, will lose a lot of its importance in the eyes of the government.