

Territorial Sea and Fishing Zones Act

penetrate close to our land and coastline, Canadian fishermen have been excluded from those waters. If we restrict the fishing rights of our own fishermen, surely we should also restrict the fishing rights of ships of the nations I have mentioned.

[Translation]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Goyer) said this evening that we would be well prepared for the next international conference on the law of the sea.

Well prepared, indeed we are!

Several countries did not abide by the rules. In fact we can take them to task on several issues and I hope that, at the next conference, we will be able to tell them once and for all to acknowledge and respect Canadian laws in order not to ruin our resources, particularly our fisheries.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, the United States Department of the Interior—I think I am referring to the right department—puts out a daily report of fisheries activity off the coast of Nova Scotia and New England. The report also covers George's Bank, Brown's Bank and the activities of vessels which sometimes fish inside the 12-mile limit. Not only do the fishing boats fish off the coast of Nova Scotia and off George's Bank and Brown's Bank, but in their search for fish they sometimes come within our 12-mile limit. One nation employs 70 boats, another 30 and another 29. It is ridiculous that these boats are permitted to come inside our 12-mile limit to fish. Legislation, it is said, regulating these waters has been on the statute books since 1964, but it has not been effective.

An hon. Member: That law was part of the Pearson philosophy.

Mr. Comeau: That law looked good on paper. It made great political headlines, but it was impossible to enforce and has never been enforced.

Mr. McGrath: We did not have the gunboats to enforce it.

Mr. Comeau: My colleague says that we did not have the necessary gunboats. If that legislation has been on the statute books since 1964, why are we in need of the present bill? I am a bit mixed up. The bill we are considering merely allows the Governor in Council to draw up regulations to enclose some of our

[Mr. Comeau.]

waters such as the Bay of Fundy, Dixon Entrance, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Queen Charlotte Sound, and so on. What were we told on previous occasions? It is interesting to see this statement on page 2 of a statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry on Tuesday, April 21, 1970:

The bill itself does not draw fisheries closing lines but enables the government to do so.

The next part of the paragraph is stroked out and the words were not spoken before the committee. They are:

Bodies of water likely to be enclosed include the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Bay of Fundy, Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound.

That part was stroked out and was not delivered to the committee. Since we have been told all along that such bodies of water are to be enclosed under the regulations, I cannot understand why the Secretary of State for External Affairs did not quote the rest of the paragraph. Does that mean that we cannot enclose those bodies of water? This puzzles me greatly. I understood that as a result of the passage of the bill many areas of water were to be enclosed. I do not want the Bay of Fundy to be excluded, nor those seas contiguous to the coastline of my constituency. It is imperative that we reach agreement with other nations on these matters because failure to do so may bring repercussions affecting the Canadian economy. It is imperative for us to make sure that once the law is passed, it is enforced. I sincerely hope we will be able to do that and protect the herring and lobster spawning grounds off our coasts. I am thinking particularly of the area I know best, off the coast of Nova Scotia.

● (9:50 p.m.)

We have a hard time to enforce the laws we now have. As I stated earlier, we have legislation but it is almost impossible to enforce it. At least, we are not taking strong action to enforce it. We cannot even control the small lobster inshore fisheries. We cannot control illegal lobstering. If we cannot do that, how are we going to do anything with respect to the 12-mile limit? Let us get on the ball and protect, by international agreement, what is ours so that we do not have repercussions in other parts of the Canadian economy.

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I wish to state the position of my party at the third reading stage of this bill. I hoped that the amendment I proposed