

Territorial Sea and Fishing Zones Act

Queen Charlotte Sound. Now, with the drawing of our fisheries closing lines, they will be unable to come back. But it is this indiscriminate fishing on a very large scale in areas which cannot sustain that level of activity, which must be discouraged. It is within our power, and certainly will be within the power of the Canadian government with this legislation, to protect our fishing waters from efforts of this kind.

On the east coast last spring as many as 60 vessels owned by foreign nationals arrived to explore a brand new fishery here—the new herring fishery. It was developing here because we had exhausted our herring fishery on the west coast. The westerners came east and began to exploit the resource in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Their success was news overseas. It was news in the North Sea where the herring fishery is all but depleted. So last spring 60 vessels arrived. We intercepted those vessels and let them know that they were not welcome in this new fishery. Many of them turned back to fish elsewhere. However, there has been a limited attack on our new herring fishery as a result of this intervention on our part. We did not really have the law of Canada behind us. We could merely ask them to turn back. Now, with the fisheries closing lines we will indeed have the sanction of Parliament behind us and we will be able to prosecute foreign vessels which might cross our fisheries closing lines.

I mentioned the drop in our catch on the west coast due to the large foreign trawlers operating there, the large Russian and Japanese fishing fleets. On the east coast, the fleets of more nations have also been active. Our Canadian trawler fleets have also been active. Of course they have been kept out 12 miles by our regulations, but the impact on the inshore fisheries has been substantial to this extent. The catch in quantity of our inshore fishermen in Newfoundland, for example, has dropped roughly by half over the last 10 to 15 years. The average catch of the average small inshore fisherman in Newfoundland is down to about 50 per cent of what it was in the mid 1950s. These are the situations which we are encountering. They are particularly difficult for small people with low incomes struggling to make a livelihood for themselves in many remote locations. By drawing baselines, by drawing fisheries closing lines, by pushing out our fishery limits 12 miles beyond the baselines, we have at least reserved for these people many bays and inlets which formerly were open to foreign fishermen as well. We

are at least fencing off some significant areas for better management, for conservation and for the protection of the livelihood of small people in many outlying areas in this country.

I hope that, like the Arctic seas pollution prevention bill this afternoon, this legislation will also commend itself to members in all corners of the House. I hope that it will be passed unanimously as well. It is legislation which, as some hon. members have said, is long overdue. It is long overdue in one sense, but let hon. members remember that again we are creating a precedent. We are creating an international precedent here in the form of fisheries closing lines. We will be criticized for it, but I believe that our defence is primarily one of conservation and good management and also pollution prevention in the sense that all of the provisions of our Fisheries Act, for example, will extend out to these fisheries closing lines, out to our fisheries limits, to protect us from pollution of all kinds and from damage which can occur to our fishery resource.

This is a good bill and I think it warrants the support of all parties. I know it will be discussed in the Committee on External Affairs, but I hope its period there will be brief, that it will be back shortly and that we will soon be able to publish the list of coordinates and maps completing the fishing zones of Canada for all time.

Mr. Barnett: I wonder if the minister would permit me to ask him one question. Earlier in his remarks, he referred to the fact that this legislation was putting the finishing touches—I think that was the expression he used—to our approach to conservation of our fisheries. Did he mean that in a completely literal sense, that this was the final step that the government has in mind? Would he mind explaining whether or not we are to take those words literally?

Mr. Davis: This legislation does not in any way refer to waters beyond what I might refer to as the exclusive fishing zones of Canada. These lines will indicate the limit where Canada has sole authority in respect of its fishery. In time I hope Canada will also have a very substantial voice in the management of fishery resources over all of its continental shelf. It is the largest continental shelf in the world, including the Grand Banks. We must take initiative there, initiative which should be taken by the coastal states. We should make sure that our resources over the shelf, 400 miles out of Newfoundland over