

but, in phasing in these modernization processes and the larger ships offshore, I think we have to give consideration to not phasing out too abruptly the inshore fishermen. I brought this up with the Minister in the form of a petition of protest signed, I think, by over 600 fishermen from the western part of Nova Scotia and, there are several thousands there who are interested in what is happening in the close inshore herring fishing which is part of their livelihood, one of the components that make up, to a considerable extent, their annual income. They seemed to be very disturbed about the big purse seiners fishing in very close to shore and eliminating them from that fruitful pursuit of it. Is there not some way that those people could be protected by an internal zone?

Mr. ROBICHAUD: Mr. Chairman, I can answer this. Following receipt of this petition that was presented to me by Mr. Bower, we immediately investigated what the situation was and, we have had long discussions with the officials of the provincial department of fisheries. There is a keen interest in Nova Scotia in the development of the herring fishery. Private capital, provincial assistance has been involved and, we have discussed this matter of, say, closing in certain areas, on the west coast and, I must admit that while we did not state that it was our intention to do so, we wanted to have the opinion of the provincial people. I want to assure you that the interest of the province of Nova Scotia, and rightly so, is the development of the herring fishery such as that is taking place there now. There are already existing regulations preventing herring seiners from operating too close to set gear and, in that particular area, the type of gear consisted of gill nets set along the shore. I do not think it would be practical and I do not think it would be acceptable by the province and by the large majority of the fishermen to close certain areas for seiners just for the protection of the gill net fishermen. We find there is very little interference, if any, by the seiners with the gill net operators, and the province would be very reluctant for us to take any action in this regard.

Mr. BOWER: Has any study been made to determine whether purse seining close inshore has a bad effect on the spawning grounds in the reproduction of the herring?

Mr. ROBICHAUD: Yes, but it all depends on how close to shore they are and, we use the expression sometimes in a different interpretation because, as you know, sometimes herring spawn right on the shore, not only close to shore but, the spawns are right there possibly in 10 or 12 inches of water. Certainly seining cannot take place unless we have a certain depth of water. But, I do not think there is an interference there. There is nothing to show us now that the type of fishing that is being carried on, whether by seiners, gill netters or others, is interfering with the reproduction of herring fishery.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, I hear the bell and I wonder if item 1 can carry?

Some hon. MEMBERS: Carried.

Item agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we rise, may I take this opportunity to thank the Minister very much for appearing several times here and I particularly want to thank on behalf of the Committee, the members of the department who have given us a great deal of their time and who indeed have been very valuable to