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—my question is the question everyone on the West Coast is asking. Why has the Minister wasted two winters since the Pearse Report without implementing any buy-back program whatever?

**Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty in following the logic of the Hon. Member who now wants to blame the Government for those who have decided, contrary to elementary common sense, on overcapitalizing and overexpanding their fleet.

● (1420)

As to his question about why I have waited, it was for a very simple reason. When the Pearse report became public, I met with all the associations on the West Coast and told them that it was up to them to come forward with a proposal on how to reduce the fleet. It was not the Government which ordered them to buy and expand their fleet. They said, "Mr. Minister, we have a favour to ask of you. Please do not implement those recommendations related to the fleet before we have had time to put our own proposals to you, and they will not be put to you sooner than next November", last November. As the Hon. Member knows, last November they made some suggestions to me. At this moment the Department is working on proposals to be put for consideration before Cabinet in the next few months.

#### FUNDING FOR EAST AND WEST COAST FISHERIES

**Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. With great respect, the Minister said that the blame lies with the fishermen. I would like to quote from his own Cruickshank report, as follows:

The present fleet capacity and overcapitalization is the direct result of government inefficiency and a series of misjudgments and inaction.

On Tuesday the Minister blamed opposition Members for raising this by saying: "It is obvious that when the Opposition does not have an issue, it tries to fabricate one". He should tell that to 17,400 fishermen and 4,000 shore workers on the West Coast of British Columbia.

In view of the fact that the crisis was government induced, in that the last buy-back program which was started in 1970 resulted in increasing fishing vessels by about 45 per year, how can the Minister justify putting up \$200 million under the Kirby report, another \$132 million to begin restructuring the Atlantic fleet, plus guarantees, and not even provide an initial loan, a loan guarantee, seed money, or funds to start a buy-back now on the West Coast when the need is so terribly obvious?

**Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member is using a very

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despicable method of trying to pit Atlantic fishermen against Pacific fishermen. I can show him that the sharing of the Department's budget between the two coasts is most fair. If I look at the man-years, the budget for the Pacific is a very substantial one.

I remind the Hon. Member that I have resisted any government buy-back of the Atlantic coast fleet. As he knows, recently in the herring fleet, where there is a substantial overcapacity on the Atlantic coast, a solution was devised by the participants whereby those who remain in the fishery will pay for those who get out of the fishery.

If the Hon. Member wants to say that it is the Government which in any way, shape, or form encourages people to invest the way they invested in the last four years or five years on the Pacific coast, I am sure there is not a fisherman on the Pacific coast who would agree with him. He is giving a very distorted recollection of the facts.

#### EAST COAST FISHERY—FUTURE OF MAJOR FISH COMPANIES

**Mr. Mel Gass (Malpeque):** Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I would like to remind him of the purpose of Bill C-170 which was passed in the House in November, 1983. It was "to facilitate the development of viable Atlantic fisheries that are competitive and privately owned".

What will the federal Government do in Nova Scotia to assist the private sector consortium in acquiring ownership and control of the H.B. Nickerson and National Sea Products companies to try to keep the plants operating and thereby maintain the thousands of jobs which are so vital to the Atlantic area?

[Translation]

**Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleague that the Government appointed a Task Force on Atlantic Fisheries. One of the mandates of the Task Force was indeed to find private investors who would be prepared to provide financing for various companies which were in trouble, and it was only as a last resort that the Government agreed to invest on a temporary basis.

In the case to which the Hon. Member refers, that of Nova Scotia, I can tell him that a solution has been found. All partners see eye to eye. The Government of Nova Scotia gave the green light last September 30 and, should it confirm its acceptance tomorrow, the problem would be solved. But once again, if the private sector can come up with a solution, we would be quite pleased to take it under consideration, particularly, I would point out to the Hon. Member, if it turned out to be a viable solution. The Federal Government will certainly entertain the possibility of making a contribution equal to that of the Government of Nova Scotia.