

We are concerned that with this new state of affairs, the special responsibilities of the minister relating to the fisheries of Canada will be forgotten. That is not an idle suggestion. It is based on concern that is being expressed in this House, in the Atlantic provinces and, I suspect, in the minister's own province of British Columbia.

I put on record during the debate on the second reading stage of the bill statistics supporting my contention that the fishing industry is important to the people of Canada and to the economy of Canada. That industry is of special importance and significance to the Atlantic provinces, to the Gaspé coast of Quebec and, perhaps to a lesser extent, to the province of British Columbia. Although it is important in that province, it is not quite as important there, in the over-all scheme, as it is to the economy of Atlantic Canada. The industry is important on the inland waters of Canada; I am thinking of the Great Lakes fisheries and the western freshwater fisheries. It is very important to the over-all economies of those regions. It generates substantial moneys for our balance of payments and pumps millions of dollars annually into the economy of Canada. Parliament has recognized that it has special responsibilities in this area and hence there has always been a department of fisheries, presided over by a minister whose prime and indeed sole responsibility has been the fisheries of Canada. In this case, the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry has that responsibility. Under this legislation, the name "Fisheries" is to be dropped. For the first time since confederation, there will not be in Canada a department of fisheries. The new department is to be the department of the environment. It is only natural that, as the name disappears, so the relative importance of the fisheries end of the department will diminish as a consequence. That is what concerns us; and it is a genuine concern.

I expect that the minister will reply by saying that so long as he is the minister of fisheries, this will never happen. I believe him. I believe that will be the case so long as the minister retains this responsibility. I believe that he will always give his prime attention to the fishing industry of Canada. Yet, he will not always be the minister of the environment, and therein lies the difficulty. He may very well be succeeded by somebody who is not interested in the fisheries of Canada, either on the west coast or the east coast. The new deputy minister has had no experience or connection with the fishing industry on either of the coasts of Canada. I think it is regrettable that the committee did not accept the amendment of the hon. member for South Shore to add two Deputy ministers to the department. The very same arguments that can be advanced for appointing two deputy ministers can be advanced for retaining the word "fisheries" in the name of the new department.

I put to the members of the committee and to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry this proposition: what would be wrong with calling the new department the department of "fisheries and the environment" or, if you like, "the department of the environment and fisheries". Either one would be acceptable. Either name would allay our fears, because we are afraid that the special responsibilities that Parliament has under our constitution with

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respect to the fishing industry will be diminished or forgotten.

There is ample precedent for including or retaining the name of the old department in the name of the new department. For example, previously there used to be the department of industry and the department of trade and commerce. Those departments were merged and became the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. I am sure that the old name was retained in the new to make sure that the special responsibilities of the government in promoting industry in this country would not be forgotten.

Going farther, we note what happened with respect to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. It is the successor to what used to be the department of mines and technical surveys. You will notice that in the new name of the department the word "mines" was retained, for the reason that the special responsibilities of the federal government with regard to natural resources of Canada and the exploitation of those resources had to be kept to the fore. Then, there was established the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development which deals with equally important responsibilities under our constitution, both of which are spelled out in the name of that department. The same arguments could apply to the Department of National Health and Welfare. The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs exercises two separate jurisdictions or responsibilities, each of them being equally important and each of them being spelled out in the name of the new department, to make sure that the minister will not lose sight of his responsibilities either in the field of consumer affairs or in that of corporate affairs.

The same arguments apply to the Department of Supply and Services and to the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The name of the department delineates the responsibilities of the minister. There is the Department of Fisheries and Forestry. The department of forestry was created, and subsequently the government decided to merge it with the Department of Fisheries. There were valid reasons for merging the departments of forestry and of fisheries; yet the name of the original departments was retained. The new department became the Department of Fisheries and Forestry. Consequently, I ask, why cannot we ensure that the new department will retain the word "fisheries" in its name? That would not diminish in any way the concern of the House and of the people with respect to the environment and the steps which must be taken to protect it. The name should be changed in order to ensure that the minister or any subsequent minister who will follow him will not forget the special responsibilities that Parliament must exercise in relation to the fishing industry of this country.

● (4:30 p.m.)

I submit these arguments are reasonable, Mr. Chairman. I hope the minister will see fit to accept the amendment which I now submit for the approval of the committee. I move:

That clause 2 of Bill C-207 be amended by striking out the words "Department of the Environment" where they first ap-