

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries

Mr. Stuart (Charlotte): I did not speak; I asked a question.

Mr. Speaker: In asking a question the hon. member exhausted his right to speak on second reading. The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich may now speak.

Mr. G. R. Pearkes (Esquimalt-Saanich): Far be it from me, representing a constituency on the Pacific coast, to enter into a debate as to the relative merits of the various provinces on the Atlantic seaboard; but I do rise to support the suggestion which was made by the hon. member for Saint John-Albert (Mr. Bell) that this bill be referred to the standing committee on marine and fisheries. A similar bill which dealt with the fisheries of the north Pacific ocean was referred to that committee a year ago, and the principle of the bill and details thereof were clarified in that committee in a way that it would not have been possible to have them clarified in the committee of the whole.

A good deal of advantage would accrue by referring this bill, although it is just a simple one, to that committee, where we could have the officials of the department give the background of the reasons why it has been introduced. We would be able, if necessary, to hear evidence from the interested parties, the fishing industry, or the fishermen of the Atlantic coast, and I believe that considerable value would be gained from having this bill referred to the standing committee on marine and fisheries which is not very heavily employed at the present time.

Mr. J. A. MacLean (Queens): As a member of this house who is especially interested in conservation in all its forms I should like to take the opportunity of making a few comments on this occasion. Perhaps it is not generally realized how important the resources of the sea are. As a matter of fact, at the present time, without the products which we reap from the sea, the present population of the world could not satisfy its protein nourishment needs. As far as carbohydrates and that sort of thing are concerned, perhaps we might be able to get along without the fishing industry, but when one considers how necessary proteins are in people's diet, one realizes that already we have exhausted the available facilities for the production of protein from the land, and must turn to the sea for it.

The other day, in commenting on this bill in the resolution stage, the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Sinclair) said, as reported at page 1934 of *Hansard*:

The Grand Banks are still, after 400 years of fishing, the greatest single fishery in the world, but in

recent years there have been signs of depletion in one or two of the banks, which give concern to the nations which are fishing that great fishing ground.

I agree with the opinion expressed by the minister when he said that the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, and the northwestern Atlantic generally, are one of the greatest fishing grounds in the world. I think it is very much of an understatement to say that in recent years there have been signs of depletion. Actually the northwest Atlantic fishery has been tremendously depleted in the last 450 years, and many forms of marine life in that area have been exterminated. It is an historic and important source of food for the peoples of Europe, and following John Cabot's voyage to Newfoundland there grew up a great and important fishing industry on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, even in the sixteenth century.

That was understandable because when that area became known to Europe it was realized that it was an area of great abundance. There was an incredible supply of fish and other forms of marine life there, and that supply has been gradually depleted. It is very encouraging that even at this late date the nations concerned should get together and do something to preserve the resources which they have in common in that area.

I quote from a book published by Mr. Biggar dealing with the early trading companies of France, at page 18:

On the return of Cabot from his first voyage in the year 1497 an Italian envoy in England wrote home to Milan that the sea in those parts had been found so full of fish that the sailors caught them by merely lowering a basket with a stone in it and hauling it up again.

In other words, the Grand Banks of Newfoundland were teeming with fish, and the same was true of the gulf of St. Lawrence and adjacent waters. When that news spread there was much interest and great excitement in Europe and an immediate effort was made to exploit the resources that had been discovered. As a result, from about 1506 on, a large number of ships went annually across the Atlantic from France, Portugal, England and Spain to fish on the Grand Banks; and the number of ships that sailed across the Atlantic in those early days to exploit the fishery there was really remarkable. As early as 1578 as many as 150 ships went annually from Europe to fish on the Grand Banks. Of course, that number was much lower in some years. For instance, in the year that the Spanish Armada sailed against England the number was greatly reduced, because crews in the Spanish Armada were pressed from the crews of those Basque fishing ships which would normally have come across the Atlantic.