

The Address—Mr. Carter

and they were very much in evidence on October 30 last. The lesson learned by the government that day must be a bitter one indeed.

One must credit the government for finally recognizing that something must be done to assist Canadians who are less fortunate than the majority. I am talking about the elderly people, the underpaid, the unemployed, those on welfare and those who are living in conditions that are less than satisfactory. However, it is questionable whether the government has in any real sense come to grips with the problems these people experience. It is questionable because although the Speech from the Throne sounds promising, it provides no real, fundamental changes in the programs being advocated as solutions by the government. The Speech from the Throne demonstrates clearly that the government has noticed there are problems in need of solution. However, it does not provide any assurance that the government is prepared to undertake any meaningful action to accomplish its stated objectives.

Representing, as I do, a Newfoundland constituency in the economy of which the fishing industry plays a very important part, I was most disappointed, but I might say not really surprised, to learn that the Speech from the Throne did not contain any reference to the fishing industry. The fishermen of my riding have become reconciled to the fact that the government is totally insensitive to their problems. The attitude of the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Dubé)—I am glad to see him in the House this afternoon—toward the need for improved and additional wharves, landing and harbour facilities in my riding would make Scrooge look like a big-time spender. In almost every community there you can see evidence of neglect on the part of the government. Public wharves are allowed to deteriorate, in many cases to a point where it is not safe for people to walk on them, and those that are being maintained are so overcrowded as to make their use by fishermen almost impossible.

Breakwaters are required in many parts of my riding. I presume the same situation prevails in most communities in eastern Canada. Breakwaters are required to provide shelter for boats and other property. Fishermen are forced to haul up their boats from the water on makeshift slipways. They run the risk of losing their boats during storms because of inadequate shelter and proper haul-out facilities. For this I give full marks to the Minister of Public Works because it is quite obvious that he and the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) are still battling over the old question of which comes first, the hen or the egg or, in this case, which comes first, fishermen or fishing facilities.

The Minister of Public Works refuses to take any action to correct these problems, on the basis that his colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, will tell him there is no need for breakwaters in St. Mary's Bay, or a wharf or community stage, because there are no fishermen in St. Mary's Bay. What the minister does not realize is that in order for there to be fishermen in that part of my riding there must be fishing facilities. That is why it is amusing to see the struggle that is taking place within the minds of both ministers as to what we should do first, whether we should provide fishing facilities or try to provide fishermen.

[Mr. Carter.]

I say to the Minister of Public Works that if the government accepted its responsibility, if it performed the function that it was intended and supposed to perform, there would be fishermen in that area. I ask him to be more sympathetic to the needs of the fishermen in my riding. In Newfoundland and eastern Canada generally, wharves, breakwaters and other facilities are an essential matter. The federal government has responsibility to provide and maintain certain marine facilities in our harbours. These facilities are essential to our fishermen if they are to be given a fighting chance to eke out a living for themselves and their families.

God knows, the life of a fisherman is not easy even under the best circumstances, but it is much more difficult when he has to operate under these conditions, when he has to contend with a government, with the Minister of Fisheries and the Minister of Public Works who are totally indifferent and insensitive to his needs.

Not only does the government have responsibility for the provision and maintenance of harbour facilities for our fishermen; it also has a responsibility to protect our fish stocks against the plundering of foreign fishing ships, and to protect our inshore fishermen against the encroachment of larger ships—I might say both foreign ships and local ships—which run rampant over their fishing grounds, leaving in their wake destruction and chaos.

• (1600)

Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions I have reported to the Minister of Fisheries instances of foreign and local ships coming into the harbours and bays in my riding without regard to the fishermen and their gear. They use the fishing grounds and destroy gear, then thumb their noses at the fishermen and sail into the sunset, leaving no compensation to the people affected. Foreign ships continue to plunder our fishing stocks, ignoring our rights and challenging our authority. This goes on without a word of protest from the Minister of the Environment or the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp).

The fishermen of eastern Canada realized a long time ago, Mr. Speaker, that they were not going to get much sympathy from the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It is not hard to detect in his attitude his absolute dislike of fish and his indifference to the treatment of fishermen. I suppose we have to make some allowances for the fact that he is a big-time city slicker from Upper Canada. However, it is another matter when speaking of the Minister of Fisheries who now prefers to call himself Minister of the Environment. It cannot be overlooked that the Minister of Fisheries shows complete indifference to the problems of fishermen and the fishing industry. We are unable to forgive him for that. We expect our Minister of Fisheries to at least go through the motions of showing interest in what is happening and to support our fishermen in their fight for survival. We expect him to take a stand in their efforts to get protection against these twentieth century pirates who infest the waters of our coasts and our bays.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Carter: We expect the minister to show concern for the lack of proper harbour facilities, and we expect him to