

S.O. 29

Mr. Prud'homme: I will never neglect the affairs of Quebec, as Members opposite do not want to neglect the affairs of the Atlantic provinces. I thank them for enlightening us.

It seems to me that the malaise is much more profound—

[Translation]

The feeling of unease is far more profound than Members have been willing to admit this evening. And if the effect of this debate was to make the Government think twice to avoid any future problems,

[English]

That is the exact reason why I participate. If there are Canadians from one part of the country who are absolutely unhappy, we know only too well where that will lead. It will lead to confrontation and people coming here to demonstrate on the Hill. I am not predicting the future. It seems obvious to me that that is what will happen. My father always told me when I had an important decision to make to think twice, and then think three times. He said that if no one says a word that means that I would be all right but that if people started quarrelling and if people said: "It cannot be. It cannot be", then there must be a problem. And as the Hon. Member from Halifax says, there is a time when one has to take a decision. I remind Hon. Members that this is not the end of the debate.

I would like for Members from the Atlantic provinces to remember that they were elected under a clear platform of consultation with the provinces. Two Premiers who are not Liberals seem to be extremely unhappy at this time. That is why I asked myself what is going on. Two Conservative Premiers are attacking a Conservative Government. That is quite unusual. It was enough to cause me to reflect. I will not apologize for participating in the debate tonight.

If Mr. Bourassa were to attack the Liberal Government in Ottawa, I would want to know what was going on. We are supposed to at least understand each other. But it seems that there is a great misunderstanding. I want the Government to be extremely careful in this case. No one needs this industry more than the people of the Atlantic provinces need it, in particular the people of Newfoundland. One does not need to come from Newfoundland to understand what the people there are going through.

When there is unemployment in Quebec, I know that there will always be more in the Atlantic provinces. I know that when not everyone is too rich in Quebec that in other parts of Canada there are some who are poorer. I do not want people in one part of Canada to say that the federal Government does not listen. I do not want them to say: "You should see what they do to us. They listen to us even less". That is not good federalism. That is not good understanding. That is not what the Government which was elected by Canadians was chosen to do. They were chosen on a platform of co-operation, listening, and new avenues in Canada. It was supposed to be great, a love-in. It seems the love-in has been broken today, and I want to know why. I thank Hon. Members for their attention. I thank the staff for having stayed so long.

• (0210)

Mr. Pat Binns (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege for me to rise in the House at this time and to speak after the Hon. Members for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) and Dartmouth—Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall). Those two Members have close to 50 years experience between them in this Chamber. Because of that, they have great knowledge about the institution and the important place it has in the lives of Canadians and of the East Coast fishery. This has been an important debate for the House.

I am pleased to acknowledge that 14 Members on the Government side of the House have participated in the debate, which indicates that this issue is very important to the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. We have welcomed the debate. In fact, there are Members who may wish to speak after I am finished. I am not sure that will be the case. I notice that there were only 10 speakers from the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party. I will not chastise them for that. It is honourable that they were concerned about the fishery in Atlantic Canada. Sometimes I wonder how far their sincerity carried, because there have been a couple of speeches from Members opposite in which I do not think they mentioned fish in 20 minutes of dialogue. We will forgive them for that.

This debate has been important to Atlantic Canada. It has been important to members of our Party. It has been established beyond a shadow of a doubt that members of the government Party can stand in the House and speak their own minds. They are not told to follow the Party line. If Members on this side of the House have questions, they are welcome to put those questions and challenge policy directions, and to provide direction on behalf of their constituents, their fishermen who are involved directly in the industry, and make sure that we get the best deal for Atlantic Canada.

It could also be for the inland fishery or the West Coast fishery. I mention that because it is perhaps a departure from what the House has seen over the last 25 years when members of the governing Party would follow the direction and policy laid down by the leader and the Cabinet of the day. That was a shame, because the Members were not given the opportunity to speak their own minds, to stand up for their constituents, and to influence government policy in the way Members have done here tonight. The House will function best if that opportunity continues.

In this debate, members of the Conservative Party have put the interests of Canadian fishermen first. They have said that other countries have fished within our territorial waters, and perhaps before they were established as our territorial waters, for hundreds of years. Yet the Government has taken it upon itself to conclude agreements which will establish for all time to come that that resource must first belong to the fishermen of Canada.

The Government has laid out a plan of action that will enable us and our fishermen to benefit from that resource for