

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé): I would like to add a brief comment to what was said by the two previous speakers. Since I am not a lawyer, I have to admit that the parliamentary secretary's remarks helped me understand a little better the amendments proposed by the government.

I also appreciate the fact that the government has taken note of the amendment I tried to propose today. I hope it will consider our position that the use of excessive force does not seem appropriate for the type of offense that could be committed by illegal fishermen.

I am a bit concerned about the remarks of the last speaker who talked about the impact of overfishing outside the 200 mile limit, on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. It scares me a little because I had said in my speech this morning that I wanted to be sure that the government would not use this legislation to lay the blame for the collapse of the Canadian fishing industry on foreign countries.

I said it in my speech and I will repeat it, Canadians must examine their own fishing habits, they have to recognize the fact that they are part of the problem. As I mentioned this morning, I would like to remind hon. members that according to NAFO, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, and its member states, including Canada as well as France, Denmark and the USSR, only 3 to 5 per cent of the Canadian biomass, of the Northern cod, flows through the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, that is through international waters.

In this regard, I would like to be sure that we will not provoke foreigners because we have a difference of opinion with them, and that is what I fear. The last time someone believed he was right, he triggered off a series of actions he might have regretted afterwards. This example might be far-fetched, but this is to tell you how much I fear that we will attack foreigners because we believe we are right. I am, of course, referring to Saddam Hussein. When he indicated that he wanted to enter into Kuwait to do what he did, I did not agree, but he had a belief.

I would not like us to take reprisals against foreigners because we thought we were right. We can get our message across without resorting to that kind of force. I understand from the remarks made by the parliamentary secretary that we are going in the right direction.

[English]

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the point the hon. member has made. I am a little worried about the comparison that he made. I presume it was for the purpose of illustration. I appreciate the point he is making. I am not going to try to make any political hay out of it.

● (1810)

I would say in all seriousness that if there is a point we reach as a nation at which the livelihood of a large section of the nation is decimated by action over which we have control, I would certainly not have respect for a nation that would allow its people to be plundered and to take no action other than to give speeches at diplomatic tables. I for one do not intend to stand for that and neither does my government.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernier (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, I will give a short answer. If ever there is an escalation in the use of force in this matter—and that is not how I understood the parliamentary secretary's remarks—I hope that at that time we can investigate or hold an emergency debate if required. But I would really like to hear Canadian biologists come and tell us what the actual impact of the so-called overfishing is. Certain candidates have based their electoral campaign on this, but I have never heard a biologist prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt.

[English]

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, I tell the hon. member that we have had three emergency debates in the House on the subject. He would be aware that before any such action was contemplated there would be yet a further review of what all the biologists have told us already.

As a member from an area that is interested in and very concerned about the same issue I am sure he too is following the activities of such organizations as the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council. It has been fairly clear in the advice it has given to the department, the government and other organizations so constructed and so intended.

The point the hon. member is making is a valid one that I am sure would be taken into consideration. This is not an irresponsible government but a government concerned about its people.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The period provided for questions and comments has now expired.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)