

Fisheries

department of fisheries because there is no department of fisheries. The budgetary responsibilities for the Department of the Environment are quite properly those of the Minister of the Environment.

I do not know exactly what role fisheries plays in relation to the Department of the Environment, although it has been spelled out in the order in council that the minister is responsible for a number of acts, including the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, the Fish Inspection Act, the Fisheries Act, the Fisheries Development Act and the Fisheries Price Support Act; in other words, all of the statutes relating to fisheries. He does not in fact have the administrative responsibilities because he does not preside over a separate department of fisheries.

At a conference of the Atlantic provinces candidates of the Progressive Conservative party at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in 1972, and again in Halifax in 1974, a resolution was passed calling for a separate department of fisheries in order to give fisheries its proper recognition within the Canadian economy. We called for the establishment of a separate department of fisheries, and under this new department for the launching of a vigorous, new, aggressive program to extend Canada's managerial control to the extremities of this country's continental shelf for the sake of the conservation and management of its marine resources. That is the policy of this party.

● (1610)

The government discovered to its dismay, as it faced its electorate in 1974, that this had become a real issue in the Atlantic provinces. So the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made a promise that the government would establish a separate department of fisheries, and I quote from the *Montreal Star* issue of June 27:

The Liberal Atlantic conference resolution called for the establishment of a separate department of fisheries.

That was subsequently confirmed by a statement made by the Prime Minister.

That is a policy of the present government. The Liberal National convention of 1973 passed the following resolution:

In view of the increasing importance of the fisheries to the people of Canada, particularly to the people of the coastal provinces, that there be re-established immediately a department to take charge of this area to be known as the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources.

I am calling upon the government in this resolution which is now before the House, and which I hope will command the support of the House, to proceed with the implementation of that resolution passed by the Liberal party of Canada at its convention and of the resolution of the Liberal candidates from the Atlantic provinces at their meeting in Halifax last year, as well as the subsequent promise made to the people of Canada by the Prime Minister following the conference of Liberal candidates in Halifax.

The reasons, to any one interested in fisheries—and certainly that includes all members from the Atlantic provinces and a good many of the members from the province of British Columbia—are very obvious, not only because of the serious problems facing the industry but because of the importance of the industry. For example, in

1973 the total value of Canada's fisheries amounted to over \$301,687,000. This represented a total in landings of 2,179,119,000 pounds of fish. That shows it is an important industry. For example, in my own province there are approximately 20,000 people who are directly or indirectly involved in the fishing industry. Indeed, it is our most important industry. That industry is going through a tremendous change, not only because of new technology but because of our failure to exercise the right and responsibility which are ours to extend our control for the purposes of management and conservation over the continental shelf.

Hon. members talk of the Law of the Sea Conference which was recently concluded at Caracas and which will be resumed next month in Geneva. We may or may not obtain agreement at that conference. Our chances are much better than they were before, thanks to the support of the United States Congress. But the fact is that we may not be successful. In the event that we are not successful, I believe that the government has the responsibility, and in fact it is its intention, I believe, to take the necessary unilateral action.

Of course, when you contemplate taking this kind of unilateral step, it is a measure of the concern that is felt in this country over what is happening to our fishing industry. In 1974 the fish landings in Canada declined over those in 1973, and the decline is a gradual one reflected in yearly declines.

For example, last year fish landings declined as follows by province: Newfoundland had a 24 per cent decline; Prince Edward Island, a 43 per cent decline; British Columbia, a 25 per cent decline; and New Brunswick, a 12 per cent decline. Notwithstanding inflation, there was a concomitant decline in the value of these landings as well. These declines in catches mean, of course, that there is a decline in the earnings not only of the fishermen but of the fish companies as well. This is probably the most serious problem facing the industry today because expenses are not only continuing but, due to inflation, are escalating. Owners of deep sea trawlers returning today with less than a total catch have to pay the expenses of the trip. The fishermen, of course, participate in a share of the catch, and the result is that their earnings decline accordingly.

That, I may add, is the subject right now of a very serious dispute in the province of Newfoundland which has practically tied up the total industry. We are now in the grip of a strike of deep sea trawlers over what is known as the co-adventurer system, a system which has been in effect not only for generations but for hundreds of years whereby the fishermen participate in the catch with the ship owner, and if there is no catch they have no earnings. The expenses of the fishermen continue. They have to feed, clothe and house their families at the same inflated rates as everyone else, and of course if they do not earn money on the voyage, they cannot go to the supermarket to buy the groceries necessary to feed their families, or continue to heat their homes, or provide clothing for their children. So our Newfoundland deep sea fishermen today are on strike. They are striking for an end to the co-adventurer system. There is much sympathy for them.

[Mr. McGrath.]