

*Coastal Fisheries Protection Act*

circumstances that prevail from time to time. This should definitely be a matter for the minister responsible for fisheries. It should not be the responsibility of any provincial administration. I would assume that at any given point in time the views of a provincial administration may be expressed to the minister, whether it be the Atlantic or the Pacific coast that is affected. For that reason I say here, as I said in committee when a similar amendment was proposed, that I do not consider it necessary or desirable to make this change in the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

I have said that I agree with the minister in his assessment of the legislation when he introduced this bill. He said it was a very minor change in our fisheries legislation. I commend the minister for not having overstated the case of what the legislation might do to protect our fisheries. In this case I think his position is a logical one, although with respect to the previous bill I did not think his position was very logical. But, Mr. Speaker, I think some of the remarks of the hon. member for South Shore were well taken. I wish the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) were in the House to listen to this debate, because I agree with the hon. member for South Shore that on the surface at least our Department of External Affairs does not seem to be taking any particular interest in the fisheries. Indeed, it appears that the Minister of Fisheries single-handedly has to deal with the situation and make statements with regard to the need for protecting our fisheries.

Hon. members may recall that earlier in the session I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether when Mr. Gromyko, the Foreign Minister of the U.S.S.R., was in Ottawa, he raised with him the operation of Soviet fishing fleets off our coasts, particularly the Pacific coast. He replied that he had not. I said this was a grave omission on his part. I seek support in this House for the view that what happens to the resources of the fishing waters of Canada is a matter of national concern, a matter in which the Secretary of State for External Affairs should be involved. The situation on the Pacific coast is one upon which the views of the Canadian government should be made known officially to the Foreign Minister of the U.S.S.R., by our External Affairs Department. It is not good enough for fisheries matters in areas such as this to be put in a corner, as it were,

[Mr. Barnett.]

and left entirely to the Minister of Fisheries and the relatively small group of advisers he has within the department.

• (5:00 p.m.)

In other words, this is a national matter and should be dealt with as one of national importance by the federal government and the external affairs spokesmen for Canada. I say this, Mr. Speaker, because of my experience in dealing with the protection of our coastal fisheries during consideration of the fishing zones act. It was very difficult at that time to develop any real sense of interest or momentum in the then Secretary of State for External Affairs who appeared to be constantly preoccupied with other matters. He was evasive in his answers in the House and little concerned about the effectiveness of that legislation.

I think some of the events that have taken place since then verify the fact that had our Department of External Affairs been prepared to be more direct and militant in the matter, some of the problems facing us today might not exist. I wish I could say, Mr. Speaker, that the member for South Shore and his colleagues were as vociferous and as strong in the presentation they made in 1964, when this matter was before the House, as the member for South Shore was in his speech today.

I wish the members of the official opposition had been prepared to support those of us who were attempting at that time to have the straight base lines laid down by act of Parliament instead of taking the wishy-washy position they took at that time. The wishy-washiness of the then Secretary of State for External Affairs was outdone only by the wishy-washy attitude of the member for South Shore who was then the member for Queens-Lunenburg.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to support this bill although I do not expect it will accomplish a great deal. However, I am happy to see that there is an indication in it that our Minister of Fisheries has some concern that we enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union and other fishing powers who are encroaching upon the fishing resources of our continental shelf. I hope that the fact this bill has come before the House and there has been an expression of concern about the Minister of Fisheries having to carry the burden of these matters alone, may move the govern-