

Government Organization Act

department is presently managed, there is no economy of scale in combining both activities under the one minister. I should like to see the contest for funds removed and an end to the power play for funds that goes on within the department.

Fisheries has become an increasingly important aspect of life in Canada. Reference has been made to the 200 mile limit. This will mean additional patrol needs and research needs on the west coast. We also have new hatchery needs. We have a need for stream maintenance. We have patrol vessels on the west coast lying idle in the closed season and on weekends, and their crews cannot even clear streams blocked during the fish runs. This kind of activity, which has frustrated and bottled up the fisheries department on the west coast, is inexcusable, a total waste of money, and indicates the deplorable lack of supervision of the various operations on the west coast.

With a separate department we would get a better accounting of the dollars used and applied for, and we would have a less complicated and cumbersome accounting in that we could get closer to fisheries activities. However, even with this we need an independent review committee to assess the performance of senior departmental officials who have perhaps moved from an expertise in the scientific world to an expertise in the world of politics.

It is my experience that senior officials within the fisheries department have political power far beyond that which is healthy for the community, for the department of fisheries and the functions it is supposed to perform. It is not possible for MP's or even ministers to assess properly the performance of these senior officials in the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, particularly when dealing with professional scientists who have been for too long in administrative posts.

One suggestion that might remedy these abuses of power is the creation of a committee independent of government—I am speaking of a committee of scientists—which would meet once or twice a year to oversee the regional work of the department. Such a committee should be a directive committee, not an advisory committee. It should have the power to change the course of the department's regional program where it has become self-defensive or self-defeating. Such a committee should have access to the region's parliamentarians and should not have to report or be responsible to the deputy minister or regional director, for therein often lies the trouble. Such a technical committee seems to me to be the only way to restore to the community some means of overview and assessment of performance of senior, entrenched bureaucrats in the Department of Fisheries and the Environment.

The role of this committee, which I think should be limited to, say, three persons, would be to function something like an ombudsman; but because much of the work of the environment department is self-initiated and self-evaluated, the ombudsman concept should be expanded to consider not only the frustrations of the public but also the general quality of work inside the department. The universities in British Columbia have often requested and even encouraged such visiting committees to assess and to criticize the performance within their own highly technical departments. Why not do the same with the

[Mr. Huntington.]

environment department, particularly the department of fisheries on the west coast?

For an enlightening example of the influence and the power that these entrenched regional directors exercise, I commend to the House an article that appeared in the November issue of *Reader's Digest* at page 81, entitled "The Salmon and Uncivil Servants". The article covers the sad story of an entrepreneur with a \$500,000 investment in a commercial hatchery and a fish feeding operation, who was driven to his knees by the most audacious bureaucratic behaviour that one could imagine. And this is not an isolated case, Mr. Speaker. I am told by responsible scientists on the west coast that the Department of Fisheries is some 40 years out of touch with scientific knowledge of their subject.

It is time that an independent committee had the opportunity to review the performance and files of the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, particularly those pertaining to fisheries activities on the west coast, so that some life, excitement, and creativity can be brought to the tremendous opportunities that exist in the west coast fisheries today.

I am also concerned with the bricks and mortar complex that seems to be built into the department of the environment. How many billions of dollars have we spent since the fisheries and environmental responsibilities were put into the same department? How much money has been spent on buildings, and what has been the cost of the additional man-hours required? Whatever it is, we still have mercury pouring into our waterways. We still have raw sewage pouring into our waterways. We have plugged natural streams which our fisheries patrol vessels are unable to clear because of the constipating nature of the fisheries regulations. It is time parliamentarians, the public, and the science community outside the civil service had a chance to appraise the present direction of this massive expenditure. We are simply not getting our dollar's worth.

• (1740)

I commend my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), for his motion, and urge the government to give serious consideration to separating the department of fisheries from the department of the environment. Believe me, it is the only way to go. There is no economy of scale with the present structure of the department of the environment. The need for both fisheries and environmental studies is too important for us to continue on our present path. This country in this day needs a modernized and vitalized department of fisheries.

Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I should like to commend the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) on the motion he has brought before the House at this particular time. During my short time in parliament I have felt it imperative that we have a separation between environment and fisheries. It has always been my feeling that the appropriate title would not be the minister of fisheries but the minister of aquaculture. This would take into account a responsibility for the farming of the resources of the