

mission on the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries? The minister will be involved in matters of pollution, he will be involved in the clean air bill, he will be involved in responsibility for the meteorological service of Canada and a number of other things. Have his responsibilities as Minister of Fisheries and Forestry not been sufficient for a full-time job? Why has this ministry simply become a division of the new department? What about the 13,000 employees and the \$200 million budget?

As I have already said, the primary responsibility of the minister of the environment will be to deal with matters of the environment, to combat water, air and soil pollution. There are so many policy decisions to be taken with respect to the fishing industry that I repeat the question, will the minister be so preoccupied with his vast new responsibilities that these decisions will be further postponed?

We are on the eve of the ICNAF conference which this year will take place in Halifax. Very important decisions will have to be made and, hopefully, consequential policy decisions will have to be made following that conference. The minister has assured us today that Canada's position at the conference will primarily be concerned with conservation, as very well it should be. Because of our lack of concern in this important area, the fishing industry is facing a crisis as serious as any in its long history. Many species of fish are threatened with extinction. My colleague the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate has been actively involved in this matter and probably will have more to say about it.

This morning in committee we heard evidence to the effect that if action is not taken soon, thousands of jobs will be lost because of Canada's failure to conclude a satisfactory conservation agreement with the countries which fish off our shores. The question of our position within ICNAF was raised. Obviously, we are one of the leading members of that body since we have a greater stake in the North Atlantic fisheries than any other country.

In order to try to obtain an agreement with the Danes, however, with respect to their overfishing of Atlantic salmon off Greenland, the minister has to go hat in hand to Denmark in June. Yet he tells us that Canada will be preoccupied with matters of conservation at the ICNAF meeting. We cannot seem to resolve within ICNAF this question of the Danes. Why is it necessary to go outside that body to get the Danes to agree to measures to preserve this Canadian resource? I say "Canadian resource" because the North Atlantic salmon, generally speaking, spawns in Canadian rivers, enjoys the protection of the Canadian government and is supported by substantial funds from the Canadian taxpayer—but it is exploited by the Danes before returning to our rivers.

The minister recently promulgated new regulations with respect to the conservation of the North Atlantic salmon, yet we are told there was no consultation with the government of Newfoundland. We have this on the admission of the Premier himself and from evidence presented in the committee. Where did the minister get his advice when he drew up these regulations which are

now being challenged by the government of Newfoundland?

We have the spectacle of the Premier of Newfoundland standing in the legislature telling the fishermen of that province to defy this law because it is not in the best interests of Newfoundland's industry—"If you defy this law we will provide you with counsel and will support you if the department dares bring you before the courts." That is the consequence of lack of consultation with the government and the industry concerned. If that situation prevails now, what can we expect in a few years' time when the minister is totally involved with matters of the environment?

To come back to where I started, Mr. Chairman, up to this time the Department of Fisheries and Forestry has been a full-time job and has required all the attention of the present minister. It has required all the attention of his officials and of thousands of employees within the Department of Fisheries and Forestry. There are some 13,000 in all. What, Mr. Chairman, can we expect in future?

• (5:50 p.m.)

We have good reason to be concerned. We are told that we approach the ICNAF meeting in a mood of concern about matters relating to conservation. We are doing so at a time when the Prime Minister of our country is in the Soviet Union, and at a time when a protocol has been signed with that country. Yet when I asked the minister in the House today what would be the effect of this protocol on our attempts to get the Russians to agree on measures of conservation in the Northwest Atlantic, he refused to answer the question: at least, he did not reply to that part of the question. I suggest he did not because he could not.

Is it not fair to ask why, if our Prime Minister could obtain from the Soviet Union agreement to the signing of that protocol which will have great propaganda value no doubt, he could not obtain within the umbrella of that agreement some meaningful accord with the Soviet Union, the country which is the chief offender in the over-fishing off our east coast? Why was that not done? Yet we will go to the ICNAF meeting in Halifax, the Russians will provide us with the same misleading statistics and we shall be no farther ahead. The time has come, Mr. Chairman, for us to question our membership in ICNAF. The organization does not seem to be serving us and seems to be serving no useful purpose for us.

We were told this morning that when our fisheries officers go aboard Soviet bloc vessels to examine gear or the size of their mesh, those officers are not allowed to go below and see what is in the holds of the ships. There is a very good reason for that. This great Soviet fleet has no regard for our conservation concerns. They move into an area and sweep all the fish off the bottom without any regard to what they might be doing to spawning grounds. These are matters of continuing concern and are all the more reason why we should have a Minister of Fisheries supported by a deputy minister.

Then we must consider the Law of the Sea Conference which is to be held in 1973. Presumably we are now