

Supply

In conclusion, Sir, no one condones law breaking, but I say to the House that this rule applies equally to Canadian fisheries officers as well as to Canadian fishermen.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to remind my hon. friend and ask him to pass the message on to his constituents that the cost of feed grain in the Maritimes will not be affected by the western rail initiative, for the very simple reason—

Mr. Forrestall: Is that a promise?

Mr. Pepin:—for the very simple reason that the cost of feed in the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario is determined by the cost of feed at Thunder Bay. That will not change.

Mr. Benjamin: And the cost will be higher because the freight rate is higher.

Mr. Pepin: The price of feed might be slightly lower in the West, indeed, but the cost of feed in the East will not be affected by this measure. Now, would he spend some time on the weekend trying to reconcile his views on the cost of feed in the West with the western Members of his caucus, because it would be rather useful if they could come to terms, the two sides of Canada, within the bosom of the same Party?

Mr. Crouse: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for his intervention and his views, but in response I must reiterate one of the major concerns of the people I represent in the farming community is simply this: they realize that these changes will bring about a larger investment by western farmers in what will be a market close to them, namely the raising of more livestock by using their own feed grains. The fear of eastern Canadian farmers is that they will face a glut of pork and beef products on the market at a price with which they will be unable to compete. We are concerned that they will be driven out of their markets, if not because of an increase in their feed cost, then because of low-priced western farm products.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Hon. Member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) on his speech. I was in Nova Scotia, in a constituency north of Halifax, and talked to farmers who raise poultry, eggs, hogs and whatnot, and they had granaries full of barley and feed wheat from Saskatchewan and Manitoba. When the Hon. Member is talking to his constituents will he convey to them the fact that if the freight charges on grain to Thunder Bay are increased, the increased freight charges for grain arriving in Thunder Bay will be passed on to feed grain users from Ontario eastward?

Mr. Pepin: Not true.

Mr. Benjamin: I ask my hon. friend if he is aware of that and would he be good enough to convey that to his people in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Crouse: I thank the Hon. Member for that intervention. I will convey that to those farmers I represent, but I am also going to convey to them the Minister's promise, on scout's honour, that there will not be any increase in the price of their feed grains. It will be interesting to observe just which of the two points of view they believe.

Mr. Evans: Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to listening to the Hon. Member's comments, especially with regard to the lobster fishery. I have some very close friends who happen to come from that area and are familiar with the lobster fishery. It seemed to me that the Hon. Member was indicating there was some justification for the burning of the fisheries vessels, that in fact the situation had become intolerable and the fishermen were in some way justified. Is that what the Hon. Member meant, because I certainly do not think that is what he meant. I certainly would not condone that situation.

It is well known to people from that area that there is a problem with poaching, it is well known to people in the area that the physical size of the lobsters is becoming smaller and smaller because there is overfishing. There is a need to cut down the number of traps, exactly the same problem faced by the salmon fishery on the West Coast. There are too many boats fishing for too few fish, and it is driving the fishery into serious recession, depression and perhaps extinction. The same thing is happening to the lobster fishery. When that fishery is gone, what happens to the livelihood of the people then?

Does the Hon. Member have any proposed solution to that kind of problem, because that is where the situation is heading if indeed the Department of Fisheries does not put a stop to the poaching and overfishing taking place on the West Coast as well as the East Coast.

Mr. Crouse: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans) and I will try and give him a precise answer. I have to because he happens to be my Member of Parliament here in Ottawa, so I have to be fair in my response. But I question whether you will give me sufficient time, Mr. Speaker, in which to inform him about the major problems.

First of all, I would point out that I do not, as I stated in the House when questioning the Minister, condone illegal acts or the breaking of the law. But as I stated in my short address a few moments ago, that belief applies not only to fishermen but equally to the law enforcement officers on the payroll of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. They, too, must respect the law, and if they did then this problem would not have arisen.

There is a serious matter of poaching but this has never been fully addressed by the Department. When the Hon. Member speaks about the Department of Fisheries' concern about conserving the species, he must realize that those close to the scene—and I speak now as a man who has gone to sea and who has owned ships on Nova Scotia for 20 years—we who are so closely associated with the industry, are much more concerned about making certain that any species of fish is not decimated. This is the attitude that the fishermen in Woods Harbour and along the south shore who fish for lobster have towards their industry. They will watch it a lot closer than the Department of Fisheries inspectors ever need to.