

Supply

It might be worth mentioning that an amendment may have to be made and incorporated into the International Convention for the High Seas Fishery of the North Pacific which came into force in June, 1953 with Canada, United States and Japan as signatories. This is pretty much of a watchdog operation, but the term used is that the convention area is determined as "water other than territorial waters in the North Pacific". The territorial waters have been redefined since that treaty was concluded. There has been an addition beyond the territorial sea and included in the Law of the Sea Convention which was concluded a year or two ago. It has not yet been ratified by a sufficient number of countries to be brought into effect. Here we run into a further complication. The nation with which our conversations have broken off has decided for one reason or another that it should not sign or ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty.

Be that as it may, we should take comfort in the North Pacific Fisheries Convention, even in its present form. It provides a mechanism for managing fish stocks of all kinds, not just salmon. The commission established under this convention was set up to collect and study data by the three contracting parties with a view to determining, through scientific study, whether any of the stock specified in the agreement, particularly herring and salmon, are being threatened and, if so, to recommend to their respective governments joint conservation measures and to monitor compliance with these recommendations.

The convention offered another hope which has not yet been explored to my knowledge. Since our salmon stocks are being threatened from a variety of quarters, it might be worth taking advantage of an article in that convention which has never been tested. Under Article 2(a) the commission established under the convention is authorized to hold public hearings. Even more interesting is that each national section of the commission may hold public hearings in its own country. That, so far as I know, has never been done. This could well be a forum for the examination of those influences, which are descending upon our fish stock from all quarters, to determine what course we ought to take. I bring this forward as a personal suggestion and I think it is worth examining. While the text of the agreement may not be in everyone's hands I do commend it to them. It is quite simple. Article 2(9) reads "The Commission may hold public hearings. Each national section may also hold public hearings within its own country".

● (1550)

The Minister's Advisory Council holds its hearings in private with the Minister. Here is a method agreed upon in the early 1950s to hold public hearings to find the full impact on our fisheries from all quarters. Perhaps it is time for us to invoke the terms of that particular clause and bring it into being. The breakdown of the Canada-U.S. talks, as I have mentioned, is serious. Any solution has to take into account the unresolved matters of the definition of boundaries.

Since my time is limited, I would like to bring these remarks to a conclusion and not abuse the time of the House, as was

done by the Minister. I would, however, say this. Let us send our colleagues from the House to the meeting that might be convened under the International North Pacific Commission. Let us remind those colleagues going to Puerto Rico next month with the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group to urge there that the U.S. invoke Article 2(9) of the convention so that it, too, can bring to bear on its fisheries people the impact and the influences we fear so much. Should we fail, we may all end up without salmon, as California has done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Brian Tobin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say I am pleased to participate in this debate whether or not on short notice. In fact, I join in the comments made by both members of the NDP and the Minister himself and say that I am disappointed that notice was given the way it was. It certainly does not correspond to the urgency that one would be led to believe the Opposition attaches to this debate.

Let me say to the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) that I enjoyed his comments and his dissertation on the life and breeding habits of the salmon. I share wholeheartedly and foursquare his observation that the breakdown of discussions between Canada and the United States has inherent in it the potential for devastating effects on the salmon stocks, and I use the word "potential". But as I listened to his comments that unfortunately talks have broken down and that Canada says it was the fault of the U.S. and vice versa, I wondered for a moment whether there was a Senate seat open in Alaska, because I did not quite know what to make of them. The Hon. Member should know, and I am sure he does know—and if he does not his constituents will be very alarmed to find that out—that we had signed a treaty with the United States during the course of 1983.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Yes.

Mr. Tobin: All that remained to be done was to ratify that treaty. Canada had negotiated, as he well knows better than I, and for a number of years we had had very difficult discussions. We had signed the treaty. We hoped to ratify that treaty, and it was the Americans and even the American administration, as the Member knows, which was under pressure from Alaska for more access to ore stock, more than the stocks could bear, more catch, which refused to ratify that agreement. Canada's options were simple. Either backtrack on a treaty already signed with the United States administration, waiting to be ratified, or say, "I am sorry but on that basis we cannot proceed". Canada has done the responsible thing. We have said, "On that basis we cannot proceed". It is a move, as the Member knows, applauded by the industry, by the fishermen whose very livelihoods depend upon sound management and prevention of overfishing of that stock. It is a move, I am sure, applauded generally by his constituents. This is why I do not want to make too much of it, but I have some trouble hearing a Member, whom I know to be well briefed on these