

department in addition to those so eloquently advanced during the past few hours. I make no apology for presenting my arguments now. For one thing, within Halifax-East Hants there exists the swordfishing capital of the north Atlantic, in the fishing village of Sambro, and we know that the swordfishery is in serious straits at this time.

Let me remind the minister of a few other points. We are a country with one of the longest, if not the longest sea coast in the world and it seems very strange that we pay remarkably little attention to our marine heritage. I would bet that if anyone attempted to take the Department of Agriculture and change it into something else, there would be a huge outcry from at least one-third of the membership of the House of Commons. So I do not understand why those of us who represent the fishing communities of Canada, although we are smaller in number than those interested in agriculture, should not stand up and speak as loudly for our rights.

I ask myself why this step is being taken in this strange reorganization bill. I think the obvious answer is that this happened to be the one department of government which had the expertise, the people available and the laboratory facilities which would make such a change possible. So this time-honoured department is to be the victim of twentieth century whims and notions simply because it is progressive and well ahead of other departments. Mr. Chairman, I hope the minister will yet realize that we on this side of the House want to retain the name "fisheries" within the scheme of things. We cannot do it tonight if we are beaten down in our attempts, but we can bring forward other motions on third reading. We can fight it and fight it again. I hope the minister realizes that.

Now, to say something kind about the minister, I suggest the strongest thing that is selling the idea that there should be a department of the environment and that fisheries as a department should be swept away is the personality of the minister. I say this without flattery but simply as recognition of a fact. Probably what has enabled the government and the insensitive technocracy that has drawn up most of this bill to get away with it is that they can see they have a very reasonable minister to sell as head of the new department. The fact is the minister is a quite reasonable fellow; he is very conscientious and we know he takes his responsibilities seriously. But that may not be true in respect of ministers over the next ten years as we go down the "pike" of this venture.

So I do not believe we should allow the minister's good name and reputation to be used in bringing about this change. We resist it on that account. We do not do so because we distrust the minister; indeed, the reverse is true. We do have trust in him. We know that he can make bad judgments like anyone else around here, but we also know that at least he will have given the matter his thoughtful attention. So we do not object on that ground but, rather, on the ground that we are dealing with institutions which will continue for a long time, and not necessarily with the people who will lead them in the near future.

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Finally, I was very pleased to receive in the mail an invitation from the minister to attend one of the parliamentary functions wherein we whoop it up on a Wednesday evening instead of looking around for something to do. The minister has asked us out to have some fish with him tomorrow night, which I think is splendid. I am sure the fish will be done up in the best methods of the experts of the Department of Fisheries. As soon as I received the invitation, I answered and accepted it—but I do not know that I would have been so happy to accept it if it had had above it the fearsome name of "minister of the environment". However, I am prepared to go along with the Minister of Fisheries tomorrow night and eat his fish, but I would not be prepared to go along with the minister and his government and eat their environment.

● (8:40 p.m.)

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Chairman, for about two or three minutes I would like to say why I support this amendment. I think it is logical for "environment" to be in the title of the Minister of Fisheries. I hope the minister will not be shy about this. After all, look at the long title of "minister of energy, mines, resources and technical surveys" as it will be in the future. It is a title almost as long as he is and I am. I think the "minister of fisheries and the environment" is a logical title. I for one, and I think many members of this House feel that he is a minister who means business regarding our environment and its treatment.

We feel the same about the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. We feel that he, more than some of his colleagues, means business. In addition, we like the Minister of Fisheries; we think he is a decent fellow and that his intention is much more apparent in terms of action than that of some of his colleagues. I hope he will be able to persuade his colleagues, who have been sitting around him in a huddle, to accept this amendment. As I said, he is a decent fellow and we think he should have both fisheries and environment in his title. I would hate the minister to not have one of these titles. It might make him only a half-decent fellow. This reminds me of the fellow who after making a reservation on Canadian National got into his lower berth and found two ladies there. He said, "I am sorry, ladies, but one of you will have to leave: I am a half-decent fellow".

In more serious vein, I believe this amendment will be looked upon by the minister and his colleagues as setting out the proper designation for the department. Probably it is one of the few areas where these two designations could be combined. While there is no fishing fleet in Regina-Lake Centre, there is an environment and I would feel much more comfortable if this function were under the jurisdiction of the minister rather than some of his colleagues whom I could name but will not. I express my support for the amendment and for the remarks made by previous speakers.

Mr. McCutcheon: Mr. Chairman, I have no hesitation in rising to support this amendment and what it implies. I think that the title of "fisheries and the environment" is extremely appropriate. I take this opportunity to reiterate