

boundary lines. That point has been reached, and as the member for Burin—St. George's told us earlier, the chickens have come home to roost and we have to draw our conclusion.

• (1300)

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I want to make both a comment and ask a question of my hon. colleague from Davenport.

I watched with interest his reaction to the thought that it would be out of the question, it would be bizarre, it would be improper international behaviour, to consider such an act as is being proposed by this very sensible motion, and specifically the part of the motion which says: "to extend functional jurisdiction to the nose and tail of the Grand Banks".

I would say that the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard made probably one of the best and the clearest statements about how this is possible in international law and I was delighted to hear it and I have indicated that to him. It is a precedent in international law that when your livelihood is being threatened or if there is a good reason, then this is a step that can be taken and, indeed, has often been taken. You have heard me speak, almost like a broken record, on this subject, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted for him to hear it from other colleagues.

From the ecological viewpoint, I have the greatest respect for my colleague from Davenport. I think he has added that dimension to this tragic situation that we see ourselves in.

Everyone has his own opinion on how this can be done. The hon. member relates it to what has been done in the past, but I wonder if the member would share with us, from his considerable experience in things international like this, what his interpretation is of the way this action can take place?

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception for his intervention.

On the question of functional jurisdiction that we are proposing, which is a technical term but which in essence means that Canada has jurisdiction on the management of a resource that affects its economy because it is in proximity of our coastal lines and because of historical

reasons. The position of the government, it seems to me, is weak.

I detect from the speech of the minister of fisheries a certain hesitancy, a certain fear and also a lack of historical knowledge from which he actually could draw, not only inspiration but also the necessary determination.

The most recent example was given by Iceland less than 20 years ago. It is a small nation which decided one day that it had to defend its economic survival by asserting its jurisdiction over its fish resources. It is clear in the memory of the international community.

This then leads me to answer the question by my colleague, to the effect that if one were to attempt to give an interpretation as to what might be the reaction of the international community, I would be inclined to suggest that world opinion would be on our side. It would be on our side for the very simple reason that the thinking of the public which has been educated, which we all have been in recent years by the report of the Brundtland commission, *Our Common Future*, the understanding of the management of common resources globally, would be such that it would applaud Canada for having taken such an initiative.

All that is needed at this point is the political will to act, to take certain risks, but to take a strong stand and give leadership in the international community. This is what we are expecting the government to do.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged and honoured to rise on this motion today, a motion to extend, among other things, the functional jurisdiction to the nose and tail of the Grand Banks.

I say, in all sincerity, that this is probably the most important day that I have spent in this House of Commons. This is a parliamentary debate on a subject that is very important to all of us here. It is particularly important to me because I represent so many people involved in the fishing industry. With 57 plants in my riding and the livelihood of a large part of those who are involved and those for whom I am responsible that rely on the fishing industry, it is so germane and pertinent to the points that are being made here today.