

*Adjournment Debate*

parts. I am pleased to see him in his place and I appreciate that he wrote me a comprehensive letter about it. For the record, Mr. Speaker, he had his own crest as Minister of Fisheries on the letterhead, which delighted me as one who has often complained that fisheries is downgraded, alongside environment. Other members, particularly the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain) and the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather), also have an interest in the area around the mouth of the Saint John River.

There is an interesting history to salmon fishing and the problem surrounding it, Mr. Speaker. It is pointed out that the government should have been taking action on this matter years ago but has only entered the picture on a piecemeal basis. Fishing was restricted, which caused fishermen to increase their investment. Then when they became professionals and should have been making plans for the long term, the minister brought the axe down on April 24, 1972, with a complete ban on salmon fishing in this area and most other areas of Atlantic Canada.

These fishermen lost their livelihood. They were not asking for compensation, but their privilege was taken from them. Consultation was promised but there is not much record of it. We have a situation of extreme dissatisfaction amongst these fishermen. Meetings were held which some of the minister's staff in the Maritimes attended. The fishermen were very worried and objected to the manner in which initial compensation payments were handled. They are puzzled over the further proof that the department is asking in order to get the additional instalment. An atmosphere of confusion now exists between the fishermen and the department.

• (2210)

I do not know whether the civil servants in the field are doing the dirty work of Ottawa or whether they are completely isolated from Ottawa. That is why I raise this question. In addition to all these appeals I have one or two that I will send to the minister. I know the minister will try to look after them in one way or another and that some remedy will result. I think the whole matter needs looking into, because these fishermen were told, "get your documentation in and we will make a 50 per cent instalment payment." That was done early in the fall, and in nearly every case, after payment, the fishermen expected the other 50 per cent of their claims. After all, if you get 50 per cent of something you naturally think you will get the other 50 per cent at some time.

They hoped that they would be paid before Christmas. Then problems arose and they received nothing extra by Christmas eve. The joker was that if total payments exceeded 125 per cent for the area, reductions would take place accordingly. These fishermen acted in good faith. Having lost their livelihood and having been told they would be compensated generously, they found by Christ-

mas eve that, substantially, they would not get the other 50 per cent. That is how the matter rests now.

I am confident that the minister will look into this question and personally cause an investigation to be made. The way this was handled needs to be examined. I believe he should look into it at the earliest opportunity.

**Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment and Minister of Fisheries):** Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation in saying to the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Bell) that I will personally look into individual cases which he or other members bring to my attention. I will also review the methods we have used in compensating or in providing a form of adjustment assistance to the east coast salmon fishermen. This situation is unique in that we are helping fishermen financially and, I add and repeat, generously inasmuch as the general practice across the country when closures occur is not to make payments to fishermen who do not fish. The decline in salmon runs on the east coast has been dramatic and we have moved in to assist fishermen. We want to help them over a difficult period and help them to re-establish themselves in other industries as long as they are not fishing.

Basically, the fisherman has been offered one of two alternatives. He can sell out all his assets. If they are valuable, he may choose that route. The assets are appraised by an individual appraiser and payment is made on that basis. I remember that in the Saint John River case, 64 fishermen chose that route and received compensation in the order of \$41,000. Another 173 fishermen chose the other alternative, that of being paid annually for a sequence of five years on the gross value of their catch. They can choose the years to be assessed—they can choose any three years in the last half dozen years—and they selected the best years from their records. They received a payment initially and I asked that they be paid as promptly as possible. They sent in an unaudited claim and received 50 per cent of that claim.

Many of them were somewhat generous in the assessment of their catch, at least according to the records which they produced later, and they received, instead of another equal amount, somewhat less than 50 per cent. All of those who were eligible for initial payments received the supplementary amount, whatever it was, on the basis of records, by December 20.

A number of fishermen believe, even though they were given the opportunity to take the three best years in the past and despite the fact that they incurred no expenses because they did not go fishing, that they have a claim. They may believe that they can produce records, supporting vouchers or testimony from witnesses as to sales on the side, and so on, which gives them a claim to further payments. I will personally look into that. I believe in this case we have been both expeditious and generous in our treatment of the fishermen involved.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.