

Fishing and Recreational Harbours

good points, but certainly it leaves a lot to be hoped for and that is the reason I am not prepared to support it at the present time.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, in response to the question interjected by the hon. member opposite let me say that there may be some things embraced by this bill that are of value to the tourist industry, but the bill itself does precious damn little for the fishermen.

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): Did you ask them?

Mr. Forrestall: You are a little older than I am, Sir, but not that much. I was handlining halibut in the Annapolis basin in the 1930s too, sir, so I know one end of it from the other. What I have reference to is a \$1 billion industry and the value returned to the economy of Canada.

Let me admit at the outset I am not one of those who sat as a member of the committee because of other responsibilities and other commitments. I wish I had been a member and had had the opportunity to listen to the explanation and rationalization of this measure by the minister and his officials. I should have liked to participate and bring to the committee's attention the view of the fishermen on the east coast.

After reading the evidence produced before the committee in respect of this bill, and having listened to the debates when the bill was before us previously, I recognize that the difficulties and problems faced by the fishermen on the east coast of Nova Scotia in relation to this measure are the same as those faced by fishermen in other parts of Atlantic Canada. The concerns expressed by the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) going back many years regarding the fisheries in Atlantic Canada and off the west coast are valid concerns. They are concerns based on experience, an awareness of the capacity of government in these areas, an awareness of the realities of the sea, and an awareness of the deficiency of an ad hoc approach to what could potentially be a reasonable stimulant to the Atlantic economy in the years beyond 1980 to the end of the century, and probably even beyond.

• (2032)

It is because of the concern expressed by such members as the hon. member for South Shore that I pay particular attention to his comment to the minister that it is passing strange that the minister and his officials would find it appropriate not to increase the funding available to the fishery but rather to embark, without a useful dialogue, on the halving of the number of small harbours in use in Canada today by our fishermen.

It is particularly strange that the minister seems pressed by his colleagues, by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) and by others on the treasury benches, to take that action. I am not sure whether the minister is a member of the treasury group. If he is, then there is no excuse, but if he is not, it is regrettable. I find it startling and somewhat frightening that the hon. member for South Shore should be alarmed, that he sees in this move, out of his experience and back-

[Mr. Darling.]

ground, an attempt by the minister and his department to increase his capacity to work with the ports, not by increasing funding but rather by halving the number of ports with the same amount of money, thereby realizing an increase in the amount of money to be spent on particular ports. It is an odd type of economic approach.

It seems surprisingly strange, against the background of a parliament which will witness the write-off of the Seaway debt, the Air Canada debt and the Canadian national debt amounting to well over \$2 billion, that the level of funding for the fisheries on the west coast is as disturbingly low as this. It may be that the comments and observations made by the minister in the House the other day are quite valid. I find difficulty in relating the minister's plea, for example, with respect to what the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) said, quite properly, that the reason for restrictions on the Canadian east ports for such things as crew changes, catch transfers, etc., should continue in face of the removal of the very reason why those restrictions were imposed. I find it perhaps acceptable, although I wish the minister could find an opportunity to explain to us in a little more detail how he intends to use these instruments as levers of negotiation. I wish he would be a little more explicit about what it is he thinks he can bargain away with us, because it seems to many of us that now we have an opportunity, as the hon. member for St. John's West observed, to turn our ports into gas stations for the substantial fleet out there.

I think that probably we should go further than that. I think it should be literally one stop shopping. We should take advantage, quite openly and blatantly, of the changed circumstances, for which I give the minister every mark and every credit. We can debate whether or not it was on time and whether or not it should have happened years ago. We can talk about the preoccupation of the government with matters other than those basic to our economy and to our people in Atlantic Canada. We can talk about the very unacceptable impact that that has had in high unemployment in the fisheries and on our general economic well being. But I do not understand the value of this as a bargaining instrument. It seems to me that with the underutilized repair capacity of our shipyards now is the time when we should be trying to attract ships to our yards and to our ports, not only for such things as crew changes and fish catches, but to actively promote the unused capacity of our yards to effect minor and major repairs and overhauls. We are not doing this, and I find this passing strange. It has been a long time since Atlantic Canada has had the opportunity offered by the fishery to help our own people well into the foreseeable future. For the government not to take the fullest advantage of the opportunity which is now in our hands is, I think, unacceptable.

It may well be that the minister is fighting his battle alone. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and others have clearly demonstrated in the last ten or 12 years that their concern is centred on constitutional amendments, on bilingualism in the country, on national unity and on all these esoteric questions. It may well be that that is the reason the minister is alone, and