

in jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments with regard to Lake Winnipeg.

That is an overview of the position of the government generally with regard to search and rescue. As I said at the beginning, I know that possibly the hon. member will not be satisfied with the information that came forward today, and I want to repeat again that since this information and the recommendations that were put forward may not be available now, I hope that in the future they will be and that at a future date the minister can provide a more substantive answer on the Lake Winnipeg situation. But it is very important that we put on the record today what has been done on the east and west coasts because, with the imposing of the 200 mile limit, it is important that we step up our surveillance, as we have done to protect that resource, to protect the stocks which are so important to our fishermen on the east and west coasts and in fact to the whole of the Canadian fishing industry.

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I just want to participate briefly in this debate, not for the purpose of holding up any disposition of the motion which I know should receive the unanimous consent of every member of the House who wants to preserve the right of members of parliament to represent their constituents properly.

I was very interested in the remarks of the preceding speaker with respect to search and rescue and his obviously deep interest in this area, coming as he does from the province of Newfoundland. During the course of his remarks I detected a reference to the fact that he sympathized with the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Whiteway) and considers that this is the kind of duty that a member should be expected to carry out in the House of Commons. Therefore I am sure that the hon. member will give full support to this reasonable request for papers.

While the remarks of the preceding speaker were interesting and heartfelt, I think it was clear that they were completely out of order, as has been pointed out by the hon. member for Selkirk, because they did not deal with the specific request for the production of papers relating to Lake Winnipeg. There has not been as yet any indication from the government side of the basis on which the government refuses to produce these papers.

We are in the position of again being confronted with a legitimate request—as has been pointed out by the preceding speaker—from a member representing an area which is seriously concerned about search and rescue of Lake Winnipeg, a member serving his constituents, as he does so ably and well, and we are faced again with the stonewalling tactics and the arrogance of this government in refusing to give any information which should legitimately be available to every citizen of this country.

Many members of the House, including the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Goodale), have spent a lot of time in the Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments which, among other things, has been dealing with the freedom of information bill presented by my distinguished colleague, the hon. member for Peace

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River (Mr. Baldwin). I think that in that investigation there has been a certain unanimity and a non-partisan approach to the whole question of freedom of information, and there has been an indication from the government that this is committed to bringing forward some kind of legislation, although when that will be one never knows.

There is absolutely no justification, I submit to you, Sir, on the basis of the government's own guidelines which it has proposed with respect to the production of a papers, for not producing the papers requested by the hon. member for Selkirk. I simply wonder aloud why we have not heard a representative of the government indicating the reason why it is not producing these papers. I can only surmise that it will in fact consent to this motion, because there is absolutely no defence. If we have come to the point of the government being so arrogant that it refuses not only to produce papers but to give any reason for the production of papers, we have come to a very sorry state indeed.

I was interested in the recent occurrence when the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts), who now has the responsibility for freedom of information, met with a representative group called Access and indicated that he was very interested in their propositions. The irony was that he refused to have the meeting in public—he wanted to have a closed meeting. Be that as it may, what are we to believe of a government which, on the one hand, pays lip service to freedom of information and, on the other hand, refuses on every occasion to provide the most innocent kind of information, the kind of information which was described quite properly by my colleague as being essential and important information to people in the Lake Winnipeg area? I suggest to you, Sir, that this attitude indicates an unacceptable degree of arrogance on the part of the government, which has lost its will to govern but not its will to stay in power.

An hon. Member: You are dreaming.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Of course hon. members opposite are very irritated and agitated when the facts are presented to them in a non-partisan way, as I am doing—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: —but I want to say that if there is a particular example of why we should get rid of this bunch and put in a fresh bunch—members opposite will of course question whether members of the opposite have the same level of capabilities as their own members, but on the other hand, we poor people in the opposition try our best—it is the arrogance demonstrated by this government on every occasion with respect to freedom of information.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1740)

Mr. Hnatyshyn: A concerned government would give serious and immediate attention to a freedom of information bill which is really worthy of the name, and would not waste the