

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House deals with the salmon and herring fisheries in British Columbia. I am sure that all hon. members recognize the importance of these fisheries to British Columbians and to Canadians as a whole. Certainly, this government does.

But this motion will do nothing to enhance the economic well-being of the people of British Columbia. Rather, if it were passed, it would do a great disservice to them. That is why this government cannot accept such a motion and why it should not be passed by this House.

The motion calls upon the government to take action against the GATT ruling in relation to British Columbia salmon and herring. This is a classic example of the kind of backward thinking that typifies the opposition to this government's policies.

Action against the GATT ruling would turn the clock backward. It would tell Canadians that we can rest content behind the protectionist barriers of old policies. It would tell Canadians to cast off the benefits that they have gained through the open multilateral trading system. It would invite Canadians to turn their backs on developments in the rest of the world.

This government cannot ask Canadians to do this. We will not make the mistake of looking inward and backward with respect to our competitive interests as the hon. member would have us do and, of course, the NDP would have us do. We will continue to look outward and forward, to seize the opportunities to enhance our economic well-being. Failure to grasp the emerging opportunities for Canada in the global economy would doom our country to second class status. This is not the approach of this government.

It is a fact of life of the 1990s that we must build strong, competitive industries which can thrive at home and abroad. The salmon and herring industries of British Columbia enjoy a world-wide reputation. They have built this reputation through the sale of top quality products. The industry has benefited from access to foreign markets. But it must also be prepared to face the challenge of foreign competition if it is to continue to prosper. The purpose of this motion before us today is to isolate these industries from the international economy. The effect would be the ultimate decline in our competitive position.

Mr. Speaker, the government has acted in response to the GATT ruling on salmon and herring. Our consistent objective in addressing this issue was to maintain the integrity of our conservation and management regimes for these fisheries. Our purpose has been to ensure the enhancement of these natural resources for the continued benefit of Canadians, now and in the future. It was for that reason we introduced a landing requirement for all species of salmon in April 1989 when we removed the regulations found wanting by the GATT and the GATT ruling.

Because Canada and the United States could still not come to an agreed resolution on the free trade agreement consistency of the landing requirement, our two countries decided in mid-1989 to place the issue, which still involved the precise nature of our GATT obligations, before a panel within the context of the free trade agreement which provided a bi-national and expedited panel process to resolve the issue.

As hon. members will be aware, that panel found that our proposal to implement a landing requirement for 100 per cent of the Pacific salmon and herring catch was not consistent with the free trade agreement, which incorporates GATT rules. However, the panel recommended that if Canada were to exempt 10 per cent to 20 per cent of the various species of the catch in each fishery from the requirement that it had to be landed, this would bring the measure into free trade consistency and would address Canada's conservation and management concerns.

In its examination of the issues, the panel was quite sensitive to Canadian needs with regard to the resource conservation and management.

In response to this panel ruling we arrived at an agreement with the U.S. that 100 per cent of the catch would be subject to conservation and management control. The settlement with the United States thus provides that Canada has the right to require that all salmon and herring be brought to a registered landing station either at sea or on shore. In that context, up to 20 per cent of the allowable catch was made available for export by sea in 1990. In 1991-1993, up to 25 per cent of the catch will be accessible through at-sea landing stations, only after verification of the conservation and management information. The agreement will be reviewed in the fourth year, with the assistance of technical and industry advisers, in light of experience and prevailing conditions.