

Supply—Fisheries

In closing I would like to make one comment in the nature of a commendation. As I know them, and as they are known by people in the fishing industry, the officials, scientists and officers on the staff of the Department of Fisheries are respected and admired. They are doing a tremendous job. We would like to see them get on with it, and be provided with the money and policy directions that will enable them to continue to do a remarkable job.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, following the example of those who have preceded me in this debate, I intend to be relatively brief in my remarks. This is not because the Department of Fisheries or the fishery industry is of small concern or of little value to our nation. The contrary is true; but unfortunately I am afraid many people across the country are not aware of the true value of the industry, not only to the hundreds who are directly involved in it but also to the provinces in which fish resources are found, and to the national economy.

The suggestion has been made by the hon. member for Skeena that it might be advisable to have two ministers of fisheries, one for the east and one for the west, and to bolster his argument he referred to the proposal to have two ministers of agriculture. Personally I am not convinced that it is wise policy in either department, because once we set the precedent we may find that we end up with two cabinets, with ministers of this and that, and another group for east and west, until instead of having about 20 ministers, as we have now, we have 40. I do not think this would be too good for the country. Possibly we are in too great a danger of fragmentation as it is. I have always taken the position that as far as national policy is concerned it should be a national policy, and if any adaptations are necessary with regard to specific areas they can be worked out. I believe policy should be evolved which will apply as far as possible right across the nation. I do not think it is necessary to have two ministers if the minister would just become aware that Canada is Canada from coast to coast and that his sights do not just rest on the one side but also are set on the other. I am inclined to think the minister could improve his position substantially if a little closer attention were given to problems on the west coast and to the representation of the fishermen on the west coast.

We appreciate the announcement tonight that the minister is proceeding to set up a dominion-provincial conference on fisheries. This was forecast in the speech from the throne; we indicated at that time our pleasure

at the announcement and that we were looking forward to the setting up of that conference. We are now pleased to hear it is scheduled for the month of January. Here again, I believe it is a matter of co-operation between the federal and provincial administrations. Perhaps we should remind ourselves of the importance of a department which would take care of many of these things having to do with dominion-provincial relations. We trust that from the conference which is held policies will be evolved and programs will be developed to the advantage of the fishing industry in every part of Canada.

There is one strenuous objection I feel I must make in connection with the lack of meetings of the committee on marine and fisheries. There was a discussion on orders of the day in connection with the committee on agriculture; it was pointed out that the committee has not yet started its work for this session. In defence of government laxity in this matter it was indicated that there had not been a meeting since a year ago last summer, some 12 months or more. I do not think that is any standard for drawing comparisons, but as far as the committee on marine and fisheries is concerned it has not sat at all this session; and it has not been made use of to its fullest possible extent for some time.

On a number of occasions the united fishermen and allied workers union of British Columbia has made recommendations and suggested that meetings of the marine and fisheries committee be held at which full discussion could be had of various problems. I do not know why the minister did not see to it that this committee was set up and put into operation. I do not know why these requests were turned aside. But the fact remains that the fishermen of the west coast have been unable to meet with the marine and fisheries committee to present their views and put before this parliament their recommendations as far as the fishing industry is concerned. I suggest, as I suggested before, that if the Minister of Fisheries wants to prove to the fishermen on the west coast that he is interested in and concerned about them, he will have to give more attention to the recommendations and requests which come from the fisheries unions on the west coast.

Many discussions have been held with respect to the north Pacific fisheries treaty. It was pointed out by the previous speaker that this has caused considerable concern, especially to fishermen in British Columbia. They are very interested in the program of conservation, but I do not think they are interested in any program which is going to deplete the resources and bring them to a