

Aquatic science and oceanography are major concerns of the Department of the Environment. They, of course, play a key role in the conditions, planning and the future of the fisheries of Canada, the jobs being provided for fishermen and the food that will be caught through the fishing of our fishermen in Canadian waters. They are inextricably tied to the responsibilities of the environment and an obvious link-up. It is only good sense that all the elements of government over oceans, freshwater lakes and streams should be under the same roof unless we can afford the luxury of dividing them and continuing on. I even argue, although there are some people on both sides of the House who feel there should be a separate department of the fisheries, that by linking them together under one umbrella the environmental side will be all the more sensitive and reactive to the needs of our fisheries and our fishermen employed in that industry.

The quantity, the quality and the accessibility of water, which are all basic key responsibilities of the Department of the Environment, have a direct relationship on the condition of Canadian fisheries. Each change in any of those areas affects the health of fish stocks. Hydroelectric developments in the Ottawa-St. Lawrence watersheds over the past 50 years has drastically affected the ecosystem as that water flows down into the Gulf of St. Lawrence—it affects the Scotia shelf and also the Gulf of Maine. The levels of those waters, the quality of the water, the accessibility because of the building of dams, the building of changes and structures to affect the waterways for hydroelectric development, affects how the fisheries can operate and how the salmon can move upstream to spawn. It affects all the elements that ultimately will mean a healthy or unhealthy fisheries in Canada.

If we talk about quality of water, quantity of water, accessibility of water, all environmental concerns related to the fisheries, I also want to suggest that even out of the water and in the atmosphere the question of atmospheric quality, toxic materials and the control of those materials, has a real effect on the quality of water and, thus, the survival and health of our fisheries. The close co-operation between fisheries programs and the atmospheric pollution control section of the Department of the Environment are, therefore, essential to an ongoing healthy fisheries and an ongoing healthy fishing industry.

Oil spills which can critically affect the survival of shellfish, the fisheries in our shallow waters along our coasts and our sea mammals, are all environmental responsibilities that are especially sensitively treated because of the joining within one department of the problems of fisheries and the environment.

● (1730)

One of the major services for our fishermen, both recreational and commercial, is the marine weather forecasting system, again a traditional responsibility within the environmental services branch. Their biggest customers are the commercial fishermen. The ice forecasting of atmospheric and environmental services is fundamental to the planning of northern fisheries off Newfoundland and Labrador, and to the

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planning and conduct of the seal fishery; again this is an environmental responsibility which plays a key role for the fisheries. Even the control of chemicals used to control forest pests, and the environmental powers which stop chemicals being used in proximity to waterways are once again environmental responsibilities; since fisheries is within the same jurisdiction, extra sensitivity can be shown and our inland fisheries in particular can be protected.

If I may make a final point or two, Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Contaminants Act of 1975, which was proclaimed earlier this year, the regulations of which I hope will be set down shortly, is going to play a major role in protecting us in the future from an environmental concern of the past which did terrible damage to our fisheries. Substances like PCB's mercury pollution, and DDT—all of these are now placed under this powerful, new Environmental Contaminants Act, which plays a key role in protecting our fisheries.

I have tried to point out a number of the links where it is obvious that fisheries and environmental concerns are one and the same and are well placed within the same department. The 200 mile limit, which the hon. member for St. John's East mentioned, is a new extremely important and massive responsibility that the government will have to face in only a couple of weeks. But the Fisheries Act which over the years, under that title, has played a major role in environmental protection will, with the extension of the limit to 200 miles, also extend those parts of the act concerned with environmental aspects. So once more we see the automatic and direct link-up of environmental and fisheries matters.

The hon. member of St. John's East made some reference to resolutions of my party, the Liberal Party of Canada, having to do with a separate ministry of fisheries or, at the very least, a secretary of state for fisheries. I think there is a great sympathy on all sides of the House for this proposition, especially among members from areas of the country with numbers of people employed in the fisheries. I can think of a number of areas where, if money were available, separate and special ministries could be set up. Personally, because of the composition of my riding, I have a very strong feeling for a ministry of multiculturalism. I think a separate ministry of immigration is an important consideration for the future. Certainly a ministry of fisheries should be given consideration if that were possible in these times of restraint.

I hope that the points I have tried to make concerning the obvious link-up between environmental concerns and the umbrella of the Fisheries Act together prove that fisheries and environment operations can function very well and, it might even be argued, more sensitively than if in fact they were divided.

Mr. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to join in supporting my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), in regard to a separate department of fisheries. I should like to see environmental matters separated from the present department and each put into its own slot, so that both fisheries and the environment would individually be more accountable. As the