

*Private Members' Business*

take advantage of the convention without ratifying it shows that Canada tries to be self-serving with little regard for its international responsibility. It is a policy that is self-defeating. It would be very difficult to get other nations to agree to establishing principles of sustainable development in the fisheries and for the high seas when we act in such a short-sighted manner.

• (1720)

In conclusion I must say that although the government does not admit it, at least officially, it has been under pressure by some international and Canadian mining corporate interests not to agree to article XI of the treaty. I am told that Inco and Noranda are each involved in separate mining consortia headed by American firms. American lawyers representing this consortia have made representations to the Government of Canada pressing for revisions to the sea bed mining provisions and for Canada not to ratify the convention until those revisions are in place.

There is a public interest at stake that is much broader, much deeper and much more consequential in the long term than that of the mining industry and of the private sector. There is a public interest at stake.

One has to ask why the Government of Canada in the seven years since it has come to power has shown itself to be more sensitive to remote concerns than to present-day concerns of our fishermen and the long-term concerns of the communities that are affected.

There is no manner in which one can deny that the Law of the Sea Convention is helpful to the fisheries industry. The government has admitted this on more than one occasion.

The crisis of vanishing fish stocks off the Canadian coasts needs coherent action which includes the ratification of the Law of the Sea, a convention which I tried to demonstrate this afternoon only strengthens the sustainable development of marine resources along the coasts of our three oceans and globally in the interest of the global community.

I rest my case.

**Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)):** Madam

Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to rise in my place to participate in this debate.

I congratulate the hon. member for Davenport on bringing forth this very important topic, though I must confess I do not entirely agree with the proposal he has put forward. I would like to respond to a number of the points he made.

Like myself he had the privilege of being part of the Canadian delegation at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Like me he was there when Canada really had a day of crowning glory. The proposal of the Santiago group, the 40 countries, relating to convening on an urgent basis an international conference on high seas fishing, the problem of overfishing and management of transboundary stocks, was really Canada's initiative. It was really a very great day for Canada and indeed for all Canadians.

When that proposal was incorporated into agenda 21 it became perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of the Rio conference. I believe a great deal of credit is due. I would take this opportunity to give credit not only to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of the Environment who played such key roles at that conference and in achieving that very important development. I would also like to recognize the officials of the Departments of Fisheries and Oceans and External Affairs, Bob Applebaum and Serge Avril, who did such an outstanding job of putting forth the Canadian point of view.

With respect to the ratification issue, like so many things it seems to be not quite as simple an issue as is presented by my hon. friend opposite. As he indicated in his remarks, the main reason Canada and all other industrialized countries with the exception of Iceland have not as yet ratified the convention has nothing to do with the provisions relating to the extension of the 200-mile limit and the control of fisheries resources and so on. Rather it had to do with sea bed mining and the issue of undersea resources and minerals. All industrialized countries in the western world except for Iceland have concerns with respect to that. That is why they have not ratified it.