

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

in Newfoundland, is being stolen from under our noses without even a whisper or a word of protest from this government. The Secretary of State for External Affairs has been too busy trying to maintain his image of being Mr. Clean or Mr. Nice Guy in the cocktail circuits of Europe to take any action to protect the future of our fishing industry and perhaps cause a few ripples in the diplomatic circles of Europe.

Canada has become the laughing stock of the fishing nations of the world. Our fisheries have been abused and plundered; they have become sitting ducks. Our inshore fishermen have been forced to stand idle while draggers operating within a mile or two from shore destroy their fishing gear and while the Department of Fisheries pretends to be patrolling our coast. Hundreds of fishermen in my riding who have suffered severe losses of nets, and so on, at the hands of these draggers are living proof that the Department of Fisheries is incapable of giving them the protection they need and to which they are entitled.

How much longer must our fishermen be expected to stand by and see thousands of dollars worth of gear being destroyed by ships which are illegally operating off our shores? If I were fishermen I am afraid I would be tempted to take the law into my own hands. Surely a man has the right to protect his own property. Our Newfoundland fishermen have "had the course." Their patience has reached breaking point. They are not going to be pushed any further or put up with the gutless approach that this government has taken toward their problems.

They demand action, and they demand it immediately. They demand that the government serve notice on the fishing nations of the world that unless the countries concerned agree to meet and to adopt conservation measures we will assert our rights with regard to Canada's east coast fishing resources by fixing a date within the next year when fishing by foreign fleets in our waters will be forbidden except by our leave and our licence. Canada must not accept anything less than full management control over the whole continental shelf.

Until such time as sufficient research is carried out to determine the condition of the fish stocks and the steps necessary to enable maintenance of a substantial yield, we must demand a crash quota system. Mr. Speaker, do you wonder why we are concerned? One billion pounds of cod was caught off the Labrador coast in 1968. In 1970, despite an increased fishing effort the total catch in the same area was less than half, 440 million pounds.

In 1967 our inshore fishermen landed 270,000 quintals—a quintal is 112 pounds. In 1971 it was down to 108,000 quintals. The minister will undoubtedly tell the House tonight that the government is taking action. He will probably describe in great detail a meeting which he will convene in a few weeks' time with the various fish trades associations to discuss this very problem. I wonder whether the minister would be good enough to tell the House why he waited until 1971 to deal with this very serious problem which has been growing steadily worse over the past ten years or longer.

Why has he waited until the fishing industry is on the verge of extinction before he starts showing an interest? Could it be that his colleague, the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo (Mr. Jamieson) has suddenly recognized the politi-

[Mr. Carter.]

cal advantage of such a meeting at this time in Newfoundland? Whatever the arrangements may be for the meeting and whatever the outcome, the fishermen of my province and indeed of all eastern Canada will not tolerate the government's continued pussyfooting.

The fishermen of Newfoundland and the other Atlantic provinces demand that their rights be protected. They demand that the 12-mile limit be proclaimed and enforced. They demand that their nets and gear be protected from the criminal behaviour of draggers which like thieves in the night move in and plunder their fish stocks and destroy their gear.

If the Department of Fisheries is unwilling or unable to accept its responsibility with regard to protecting our fishermen, giving the fishermen of Newfoundland and eastern Canada the protection they deserve, I suggest that it should call in the navy. Surely the fishermen should not be expected to stand by and see their livelihood being destroyed and thousands of dollars worth of their fishing gear being destroyed with hardly a whimper from the Department of Fisheries. If the department's vessels cannot properly patrol our coast, I strongly recommend that the navy be forced into action.

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, first on behalf of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson)—the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo—and myself, I would like to invite the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Carter) to a meeting with the fishing industry here in Ottawa on October 8 when we are going to discuss a number of these problems.

He will learn that the fishing industry in Newfoundland is not in immediate danger of collapse, as he has stated. In fact, the income of fishermen in Newfoundland has never been higher. This year it will be higher than in any previous year, and by a very considerable margin. The main reason has been a remarkable increase in the price of fish since the spring of 1969, an increase which has averaged better than 50 per cent. Our all-time record year in volume was 1970. We are off a few percentage points this year in volume, but this remarkable increase in price has more than offset the drop in volume. So if we are talking about past performance, the achievements of last summer have been remarkable indeed. I would be the first to admit that we started from a very low base and we have a long way to go in generating income in the fishing industry on the east coast before it is satisfactory to everyone.

The hon. member for St. John's West says that Canada is the laughing stock of other fishing nations of the world. I do not know what circles he moves in, but overseas fishermen envy Canada's bold initiatives, not only in declaring a 12-mile limit but in pushing other countries out of such large bodies of water as the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Bay of Fundy and many other large inlets up and down the east coast.

As I say, representatives of the industry will be coming to Ottawa on October 8 to make submissions to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp), the Minister of Transport and myself. They will be making a number of recommendations, some of which are already being acted upon. I have no doubt that sitting down again with the industry, as we have been wont to do, we will come up with ideas. One may be to push other countries