

*Supply—Fisheries*

these estimates were not referred to the committee this year. I also want to give the undertaking now that at the next session of parliament it is my intention to have the estimates of the department referred to the standing committee on marine and fisheries.

**Mr. Howard:** The minister's statement is appreciated. I hope that next year nothing will interfere with the minister's desire.

**Mr. Robichaud:** I hope so too.

**Mr. Howard:** When I say "nothing" I am excluding the possibility of an intervening election and the defeat of the government, because I would not want to assume that he would be the minister after the next election or that the present government would still be in office. Apart from that, I hope that nothing else interferes with the intention of the minister.

You will be aware, Mr. Chairman, that for a variety of reasons not only the Department of Fisheries but other departments of the federal government have been given only a very cursory examination by parliament in the last few years. I would say this is not the fault of anyone. It is certainly not the fault of the Minister of Fisheries. We will recall that there was a federal election in 1962. Elections interfere with the operations of the government and, in fact, the government stops thinking policywise for at least five or six months at such a time. There was also an election in the spring of 1963 which likewise interfered with the thought processes of government. In fact, I doubt very much whether their thought processes have got back on an even keel yet. Nevertheless, there was interference with what is considered to be the normally responsible way of considering and inquiring into the estimates of expenditures of any department, and of course the Department of Fisheries was so affected.

Last year in fact there was a very earnest desire on the part of members of the house to rush through the estimates, because it was then October. The hope was that if we could get last year's estimates out of the way quickly enough we would be able to get back on an even keel and be able to study the current year's departmental activities in a better way than had been the case in the past. Unfortunately, however, we now find ourselves nearing the end of September, and we are still in the midst of the estimates even though more than half the money has already been spent. Again there is a desire on the part of members to rush through the esti-

mates and get these expenditures out of the way, because after all the year is almost over. This is a regrettable state of affairs.

Mr. Chairman, I do not know whether you looked upon the intervention of the minister as being an interruption in the speech I originally started to make and whether I am now embarking on another 30 minutes but in any event I have no intention of doing so.

When the minister introduced his estimates yesterday he gave a very glowing report about conditions in the fishing industry. If one were to accept his statement he would think that we really do not need to think about these matters at all, because things are so excellent in the fishing industry that there is no need for us to express our views. However there are a number of matters I should like to leave with the minister in closing on which I should like him to comment, and perhaps explore in a bit more detail as we proceed through the estimates item by item.

At the United Nations conference on the law of the sea held in Geneva from February 24 to April 27, 1958, four vitally important fisheries conventions were adopted, one on the territorial sea and contiguous zones, another convention having to do with the high seas, a third convention having to do with fishing and conservation of the living resources of the high seas and a fourth convention concerning the continental shelf. I may not be correct but I understand that Canada is not a signatory to any of these conventions and has not taken the formal step of adopting, endorsing or ratifying them, whatever the formal step may be, to indicate that Canada is in agreement with them. I should like to know why we have not taken action to endorse the principles contained in these four conventions, particularly in view of the importance to Canada of fisheries activities on the high seas and on the continental shelf.

The salmon industry of British Columbia has been in difficulties for some years. If one wants to boil things down, I suppose the problem is too much gear, too many fishermen and not enough fish. Proposals have been made for licence limitation. A study was made by Dr. Sol Sinclair a few years ago about which nothing has been done so far as I know. This year however we discovered that gillnetters on the coast had taken out trolling licences. They did so because in past years they had found that their gillnet activities had yielded a very low return. They were only able to get up to a four day fishing week and they wanted to go trolling