

Oceans is to protect the resource for present and future generations.

The present crisis in the Pacific fishery flows from the combined effects of a serious state of decline in salmon stocks and the extremely depressed state of the economy of the commercial salmon fishery. These have resulted in increased conflict and competition among the various users of what has been dwindling resource and between them and the managers of that resource.

● (1440)

As I have stated in the House on several occasions, since the values and benefits flow from the resource, then on behalf of all Canadians, present and future, my first responsibility is to the state of the resource. Only by serving this responsibility can I fulfil my responsibility to those who depend on it and who may depend on it in the future. This, then, is the first of the issues.

In view of the risks, complexities and costs involved in the alternatives, it is quite apparent to me that Canada's wild or natural stocks of Pacific salmon must be rebuilt. This could be simply left to occur naturally or could be given a helping hand, depending on time and abundance targets. But it is a simple truth that it cannot be achieved without the reduction in the harvest or exploitation rate of these natural stocks. My objective is to rebuild Canada's natural stocks of Pacific salmon as nearly as possible to historical levels and optimum sustainable yield. I am currently in the process of concluding consultations with the user groups as to targets and scope, methodology and timing.

In this debate I am most anxious to have Hon. Members opposite state their position on these matters. In a nutshell, they should please come up with proposals if they have any.

While there have been many contributing causes of the state of decline in salmon stocks, Commissioner Pearce in his study found that the principal cause has been something that everybody knows about, over-fishing. This in turn has been due in large part to the excessive economic demands of over-capacity in an over-capitalized commercial fleet. Even over-fishing has been unable to allay the economic decline caused by the financial requirements of this over-capitalized and excessive capacity.

It is therefore equally clear to me that the size and capacity of the commercial fleet must be reduced. The Government fully intends to introduce measures which will result in the substantial reduction in the size of the commercial fleet and we are currently in the process of concluding consultations with the user groups as to targets and scale, configuration, methodology and timing.

In this debate I am most anxious to hear the Opposition state its policy in these respects in order that its views can be taken into account along with those of the various user groups.

### *Supply*

I am also anxious to have the user groups hear a clear statement of the policies, positions and ideas of the Official Opposition.

My bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that we must put an end to the over-fishing of the stocks of British Columbia. This is my bottom line. We have to stop the over-fishing. We must rebuild the stocks. There are several ways of doing that but one thing is for sure—that must be the first step, the premise of all our policies.

It is also quite obvious that, due in part to the nature of human interaction between resource users and resource managers, along with a variety of other factors, the best efforts of present management and regulatory arrangements have not been successful in preventing or precluding the present crisis and dilemma in Pacific salmon fishing.

The Government has conducted extensive reviews, studies and analyses of all the various aspects of these management and regulatory arrangements. We are currently in the process of concluding consultations with the user groups through the MAC about whether changes in these arrangements might be made to improve the present situation and prevent its recurrence and, if so, the nature, extent and rate of implementation of such changes.

I can tell you that we have used the intervening time wisely to develop a reasonable rate of alternatives which are this very day being discussed in Vancouver by the senior management of the Department, my senior policy adviser with the MAC. Nevertheless, in this debate I am also yearning to hear the outpouring from the idea bank on the other side of the House of some concrete suggestions which will simultaneously provide for—and I beg you to listen—first, increased control of catch; second, reduced cost of fishing; third, selectivity of mixed stock fishing; fourth, adjustment of catch between year types; fifth, removal of incentives to over-capitalization; sixth, increased resource rent to the people of Canada; seventh, deterrence from the cost of racing to compete for the common property resource; and eighth, increases in escapements to the spawning grounds.

Obviously, the Opposition would like to have its cake and eat it too. We have taken the time to consult with the user groups. We have taken the time to analyse and to think these complex issues through and to develop a range of realistic, effective alternatives. These are on the table to be discussed with the MAC today and tomorrow and further final consultation is already scheduled.

While we are not very much interested in acrimonious debate or in spurious crass political posturing, we are genuinely concerned with the interests of those who depend now and will in the future depend on the Pacific salmon resource. We would therefore be very pleased indeed to be dazzled by the foresight of Hon. Members opposite in setting out clearly their own position on these issues as well. We would welcome a