

Search and Rescue

Mr. Rompkey: I realize in his speech today he dealt with Lake Winnipeg specifically. I indicated to him in my opening remarks that in the absence of the minister he was not going to be fully satisfied with the indications of what was being done with regard to Lake Winnipeg. I wanted to get to the question of jurisdiction which he raised in his speech. Hopefully, at some future date he can get more specific information, which is what he wants. As a member of parliament, I respect his responsibility to get that information. When the information can be made available, I hope it will be forwarded to him.

To continue with my remarks, I was talking about the deployment on the east and west coasts where we have, as the hon. member will understand, the greatest return to the country in terms of fisheries. Something like \$1 billion is returned to Canada as a result of the fishing effort on the east and west coasts. It is important that this be put on the record. I refer to what Canada is actually doing to step up its search, rescue and surveillance activities.

From the outset it was recognized by all concerned that use of the diverse nature of the resources that would be employed in accomplishing the increased levels of surveillance it would be necessary to have firmly established mechanisms of co-ordination and liaison between the three operating departments. All three departments were committed to developing the necessary co-ordination and liaison mechanisms with the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, identified as the lead agency in this regard, because fishery surveillance and enforcement is its statutory obligation as established by the Fisheries Act.

Furthermore, the Department of Fisheries and the Environment was responsible for paying to the two other departments the increased operation and maintenance costs arising from the increased levels of fisheries surveillance. Against this background the Department of Fisheries and the Environment held in May, 1976, an interdepartmental meeting with a view to establishing a framework that would ensure rapid and well co-ordinated implementation of the increased levels of surveillance.

It was proposed by the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, and agreed to by all departments, that on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts interdepartmental co-ordination committees, chaired by a senior Fisheries official, would be established and would meet on a regular basis. Part of the confusion over jurisdiction on the east and west coasts, and part of the fragmentation in terms of administration, has been overcome. There is now a committee on each coast under the Department of Fisheries and the Environment to administer search and rescue activities. That was one point, albeit possibly a minor point, which was raised by the hon. member. I hope my remarks will clarify that issue.

In addition, it was agreed that, as necessary, interdepartmental meetings involving senior officials from Ottawa headquarters would be held. The Department of Fisheries and the Environment also identified officials in Vancouver, St. John's, Halifax and Ottawa who would be responsible for day to day co-ordination of the fisheries surveillance and enforcement

[Mr. Whiteway.]

program. I note there is nobody identified for the area to which the hon. member referred in his question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Whiteway) on a point of order.

Mr. Whiteway: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should know, all matters relating to fishery inspections come under the jurisdiction of the province of Manitoba. Inland fisheries is a provincial resource and a provincial jurisdiction. Therefore, comments relating to inspections or areas of jurisdiction have nothing to do with Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the hon. member, I would like to say he should give the Chair an opportunity to listen to argument by other hon. members. It is not helping the progress of the debate if the hon. member intervenes. I hope the hon. member, as he normally does, will stay within the confines of the motion before the House.

● (1730)

Mr. Rompkey: Mr. Speaker, I understood that we were talking about search and rescue operations and the administration of those, and it is quite possible that, if in fact inland fisheries are the responsibility of the province, the hon. member should be raising his question with the province of Manitoba rather than in the federal House. If in fact that is the case and if the jurisdiction is there, obviously there must be some relevance if the hon. member is raising it in the House. He is raising the question of search and rescue. I am assuming that therefore there is some federal involvement. Possibly one of the problems here is that in fact there is a shared responsibility, and possibly the over-all responsibility is more that of the province than of the federal government.

I think that the committee which was set up had indicated that, in relation to the vessel resources advocated, the vessels allocated on behalf of the federal government would do their duty in the Great Lakes and on the St. Lawrence, as well as on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. I understand also that there is a certain lack of marine search and rescue incidents on non-international inland waters such as Lake Winnipeg, for example, and I note also that search and rescue operations are covered for Lake Winnipeg by a new high performance MOT navigational aids vessel. The acquisition of this vessel was justified in part on the grounds that it would be used for marine search and rescue in addition to normal program duty. So it is my understanding that there is now, or at least there will be—I am not sure of the time frame of the information—a vessel which is to be deployed for use on Lake Winnipeg.

Possibly one of the difficulties here is in fact the division of responsibility between the province and the federal government. We do not have as clear cut a jurisdiction with regard to inland waters as we do with regard to the east and west coasts. On the Great Lakes, for example, our jurisdiction is shared between the two countries that share the Great Lakes, and I would assume that part of the difficulty here is the difference