

*Supply—Fisheries*

by eating oolachan which had been contaminated as a result of this raw sewage.

While the oolachan fishery may not be of importance in a commercial sense, it is of vital concern to the Indian people, as I am sure the minister is aware from personal experience or from advice he has received from the officials of his department. If the raw sewage from the community of Kitimat is to continue to be discharged into the Kitimat river, resulting in this pollution, while it may not interfere with or destroy the oolachan it will undoubtedly continue to interfere with the fishery as far as the Indian people are concerned. The spring of the year is the traditional time when these Indians harvest certain sea products, but they must maintain their harvest of oolachan because it forms a very important part of their diet. If this health hazard is to continue they will have to discontinue catching the oolachan, thereby losing a staple and traditional part of their food.

This question has been kicked around by the Department of National Health and Welfare, which appears not to be too interested in it and does not seem to grasp the importance of the problem. The B.C. provincial government authorities also do not appear to be too interested. The municipality of Kitimat, which might engage in the installation of a sewage treatment unit, has not proceeded so far because from their point of view the installation of such a sewage treatment plant would be financially prohibitive, having in mind the relatively small population of Kitimat compared to the cost of installing such a plant. So far the Department of Fisheries has not to my knowledge done anything extensive in attempting to correct the situation.

However, somewhere along the line some government agency has to start the ball rolling by offering some help. Maybe it will require a contribution from the Department of Fisheries to the municipality of Kitimat to assist in the installation of a sewage treatment plant. Perhaps it will be a joint effort of the Department of Fisheries, the Department of National Health and Welfare and the provincial government, especially in view of the rapport that exists on fisheries matters between the federal authorities and the provinces. Somewhere a start has to be made, and I appeal publicly to the minister, knowing his sense of fair play, his desire for the preservation and conservation of the fisheries and his desire to protect at all levels the

[Mr. Howard.]

interests of all those who live off the fisheries on the west coast.

I am merely asking him to undertake a study and to look at the situation to see if some proposal cannot be worked out. Perhaps this is being done already. There are five or six months left before the next oolachan run comes along in the spring of the year and if we start to work on the problem now we may be able to come up with some satisfactory solution by that time so that the natives at Kitimat can continue to catch their traditional fish. I notice that the two or three fish I left with the minister a moment ago have been consumed, undoubtedly with some relish, and from this sample the minister will appreciate how important and necessary it is that the native people, whose traditional food this is, continue to have the opportunity to catch and consume it without placing their lives in jeopardy in the process. If the minister would care to make some comment I would be very happy to hear it.

**Mr. Robichaud:** Mr. Chairman, I will be very brief. I wish to thank the hon. member for bringing this situation concerning the oolachan to our attention. I note that this small fish acts like the smelt in that it comes from salt water to spawn in fresh water. The problem he has mentioned is well known to my department. We have made some surveys and have done some research concerning the situation. We have found out that the oolachan are not affected by the condition of the water and we are unable to act with respect to the matter because it does not come within the scope of our jurisdiction. It is a local problem which needs the co-operation of the provincial authorities, who are responsible for health matters, and also the local municipal authorities. In view of the remarks made by the hon. member I want to assure him that we will again take up the matter with the authorities concerned to find out if something cannot be done to improve the situation.

**Mr. Howard:** Just as an adjunct may I say it is undoubtedly true that the oolachan is not adversely affected by swimming through the sewage area.

**Mr. Robichaud:** They are immune.

**Mr. Howard:** It is the opinion of Dr. Woolcott that the trouble arises from the fact that when the native people catch the oolachan and take them out of the water they cannot spend the time scraping the muck and guck off each fish before hanging it up to dry