

**The Chairman:** Is the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants prepared to accept a question?

**Mr. McCleave:** I would like to finish the sentence first and then I will permit a question. I was trying to make a point that there is more than simple pride involved here; there are basic principles involved. Now I will be glad to accept the question.

**Mr. McGrath:** Would my hon. friend tell the committee whether there is a minister designated as the minister of fisheries in Nova Scotia? Perhaps he could tell the committee how the government of Nova Scotia would react to the downgrading of the department of fisheries and, indeed, the elimination of the department of fisheries in this legislation.

**Mr. McCleave:** Mr. Chairman, there is a department of fisheries in the government of Nova Scotia. The minister of that department has several other occupations at the present time. I do not think I should get myself into that subject. My hon. friend from St. John's East is so skilful in casting bait—

**Mr. McGrath:** I am trying to get a rise from the President of the Privy Council.

**Mr. McCleave:** I prefer to deal with the issue which is before us. I am pleased that the speech made by the hon. member and the speech made by the hon. member from the riding next to mine should have encountered such a reception, because I think that is where the heart of Parliament lies—its essential guts and its essential workability to the people of Canada—when it can respond in a human way, and I suggest that this argument is very much along those lines.

The hon. member who preceded me spoke about the blow which the swordfish industry has received because of the mercury problem. This illustrates the problems the minister will face when he marches off with his new title as minister of the environment. As we know, because the catches have contained a certain level of mercury the whole industry has become suspect and the fish cannot be sold for human consumption. There are serious questions whether the level of mercury, the measuring device, is too high. I shall not deal with this matter. But I would draw attention to the schizophrenic element which is imposed on the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry, soon to become minister of the environment. On the one hand he is being asked to look after fisheries matters, and on the other he is being asked to look after the environment in which all of us live.

● (9:30 p.m.)

I suggest that there are essential conflicts in the duties of the position that the minister must occupy. He must weigh one factor against the other. If he makes a decision relating to one part of his responsibilities, the other part may suffer, which I think is asking too much of any minister of the Crown. I would prefer to see the ministry split into two; then both ministers could be conscientious and could present the best argument that they could

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make. If one minister was of the opinion that swordfish containing a certain level of mercury would be damaging to human life, the other would be able to argue that over the years swordfish had entered streams containing a fairly high content of mercury and had thus become contaminated. In this way the two ministers could argue back and forth and somebody else could be arbiter. I think no man, even one with the wisdom of Solomon and the sharpest of faculties in the world, should be put in the position of both judge and jury.

Another factor that has to be taken into account both bureaucratically and ministerially is the good old Ottawa pecking order. We all know that within the ranks of the public service of Canada there is a pecking order, and a precious thing indeed it is when you see it in operation. When you have a pecking order within a department consisting of a deputy minister and two assistant deputy ministers, one dealing with the environment and the other with fisheries, who pecks first? Who does the chasing as far as expenditure is concerned? So on the ground of pecking order alone, in addition to this schizophrenic aspect to which I refer, no minister faced with such a conflict could make a success of his portfolio.

As I talk of these things in this chamber I can close my eyes, eliminate the cackle and buzz from opposite and think of parts of Canada where life is lived to the full. Instead of the hubbub and indifference opposite I can visualize parts of Canada where people go out in all kinds of weather to take part in the advancement of this country. I think of people who venture forth in miserable weather to support their families, feed their neighbours and the like.

I can visualize the fishing village of Sambro with its great wharf, albeit inadequate to meet the needs of the fishermen who have made Sambro, in Halifax county, the fishing capital of the North Atlantic. Most of these fishermen are not very talkative, but by God they can fish and bring in the catch. They are not as polished or sophisticated as the yackers opposite, but they know where the action is. Each of these fishermen who owns a fishing vessel is financially obligated to the extent of tens of thousands of dollars. I would ask members of the opposite side, or on this side for that matter, how they would feel if they were faced with such an obligation. What would the minister say—not the one with the money, the other one—if he had a capital obligation of \$50,000 to meet at an interest rate of 8 to 10 per cent on a short-term loan, which is all one can get on an asset like a fishing vessel?

I have pressed the minister on three different occasions in the House on this matter. These sword fishermen are facing personal disaster. If they go bankrupt, then no amount of retraining for any other kind of fishing will help them. If you sent them out fishing sardines tomorrow it would not help them meet their financial obligations. Special boats are required in the swordfishery. This is the sort of conflict that would arise if the fishery and the environment were combined within one department. The minister can sentence these men to a life of debt from which they can never escape; it is as simple as that.