

Private Members' Business

this particular instance they see the merit of beginning the process. Yet the remarks from the government, from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans were an unmitigated disaster.

I hope we will have an opportunity to hear from the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the minister of federal-provincial relations later on in the debate about how they believe it is such a great priority.

I am disappointed in the response of the government. I want it to be clearly on the record that we as a national party, and we stated it in a national party resolution, support the extension of the jurisdiction beyond the tail and nose of the Grand Banks. We made the motion knowing full well that it would not just be by the stroke of the pen, that it would be a timely process and there would be time for the Government of Canada to move in that direction.

What have we heard? A road block, excuse, a road block, excuse, a road block, excuse. Before the hon. members stand in their places and condemn us I want them to know that we do not believe that by extending this jurisdiction the fisheries will change over night. For God's sake, as a national priority come to the aid of people who fish off the Grand Banks and off the east coast, whether in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I. or Newfoundland. Come to their aid and come to their cause. It transcends partisan differences. It ought to transcend different ideologies, whatever they may be. But there is this foot dragging and this excuse that we have to talk to this certain country. We cannot do this with that country and this country over here has this bilateral agreement. We are all part of this international organization and therefore they may not accept or agree. But if you do not begin the process the objective will never be achieved.

We have heard the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans say in debate on the floor of this House, as I believe my colleague made reference to, that the extension of the jurisdiction would be a laudable goal and objective. But no one in the department or within the Government of Canada has acted. I do not blame so much the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans; I blame the minister of external affairs who has shown wanton disrespect and neglect of the fishermen of this country, particularly on the east

coast. I do not know how any member of that party opposite, particularly from Atlantic Canada, could support that minister or her candidacy for higher office.

I want to put it on the record that we will raise this issue again and again. We hope over a period of time members opposite will realize the importance of the goal we are trying to achieve.

I will conclude my remarks this evening by once again thanking my colleague, the hon. member for Bonaville—Trinity—Conception, for having the foresight to put this motion before the House and for having this debate on an important fundamental aspect of Canadian life; of Canadian fisheries policies. It is fundamental to Canada's place in the world as it interfaces with other countries throughout the world. I thank and congratulate my colleague for having that foresight.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles-Eugène Marin (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, this evening we are discussing the advisability of extending the Canadian 200-mile limit. Extension of custodial jurisdiction would amount to unilateral extension of jurisdiction outside 200 miles. Since there is no provision for such action under international law, such action by Canada would be opposed by the international community. It would be unenforceable. It would invite confrontation, potential violence and threat to life at sea.

What this government is doing, instead, is working co-operatively at the bilateral, regional and multilateral level to give full effect to the provisions of the law of the sea convention regarding conservation and management of high seas fisheries.

Significant progress has been made, and I would like to review for hon. members some of the effective steps this government has been taking and will be taking through what we call our legal initiative in seeking international action to stop the overfishing on the high seas before valuable resources are further depleted and the coastal communities that depend on them for their existence are devastated.

First, however, I would like to review the nature of the problem. It is only through understanding the problem that has developed in high seas fisheries that the elements of an effective solution can be worked out in full.