

Government Organization

had a pay increase for a great number of years. Even 20 years ago our wardens were underpaid. They are the forgotten men of the Department of Fisheries. I hope the minister will have a chance to wet his line and go salmon fishing this year. He may then talk to some of these fine men who protect our rivers and conserve our salmon stocks. When the estimates are finally brought down for the next financial year I hope that consideration will be given to the plight of the river wardens and that they will be recompensed not only for the work they do but for the period during the winter months when they cannot work. These dedicated men love their work and protect our rivers. Unfortunately they are not being paid enough.

I hope that forestry matters in the new department will not absorb too much of the minister's attention at the expense of our fishing industry. In my view, it was a mistake to merge the fisheries and forestry portfolios. Nevertheless, in its wisdom the government has decided to merge them. I hope the minister will not lose sight of his tremendous responsibilities to our fishing industry. Perhaps he will consider enlarging his department and appointing two deputy ministers of fisheries, one responsible for the west coast and the freshwater fish industry and the other responsible for the Atlantic fish industry.

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Chairman, I wish to make three brief comments. It might be apt for me to say to the minister who comes from British Columbia, which is celebrating the arrival of spring, that the Halifax area had springlike weather from mid-December until the first day of this week. We are not grateful to British Columbia for getting rid of its winter weather and dumping it on the Halifax area.

The first point I wish to raise concerns conservation. Lobster fishermen in my area advise me that scuba divers operating from yachts out of Halifax have been terrorizing the lobster population in places like Sambro harbour. Pretending they are out on innocent scuba diving operations, the divers go down to the bottom and, with hand pots, take the hapless lobsters. By the time our lobster fishermen get to the area the lobsters have been devoured. I submit that the enforcement officers of the department ought to examine this problem which is of serious import to our lobster fishermen. For the fellow on the yacht the exercise is simply a playful diversion, but for the fisherman it means a loss of livelihood.

[Mr. McGrath.]

My second point concerns the amplification of the lobster licensing program announced by the minister. In particular I wish to deal with the provision which says that where lobster boats were jointly owned and operated in 1968 and were permitted under the regulations of that year to fish with 50 per cent more lobster pots they may continue fishing with 50 per cent more lobster pots. Apparently permission to fish with the increased number of traps is withdrawn when one of the partners in the enterprise withdraws from lobster fishing. I point out to the minister that very often a lobster fishing boat is run as a father and son operation. In most instances the partnership is broken up on the death of the senior lobster fisherman, the father. With a certain class of boats it is an absolute requirement that at least two people be fishing from them if the boat is to work effectively.

● (12:40 p.m.)

The minister may find that new problems will be created by suddenly wiping out the 50 per cent extra privilege. As an example, the capital burden will have to be borne by the survivor rather than by the two people. In the case of a father and son, if the father dies the surviving owner would have to hire somebody and would not be able to give him the advantage of joint ownership of the boat. In addition, the survivor would have to bear the financial burden involved in a catch only two-thirds of what was previously permitted. I realize the minister and his officials have shown good will and great adaptability in listening to the points of the fishermen, for which I thank them, but I utter the warning that this is a problem that may cause them great difficulties in the future.

I am sorry that the reorganization bill does not give the minister more power in the building of wharves. The wharf program as it relates to fisheries should be handled by the Department of Fisheries rather than the Department of Public Works. The Department of Public Works could still supervise the building, but the capital program should be the responsibility of the Minister of Fisheries. The disadvantage of it being the responsibility of the Department of Public Works is that when the government cuts down spending public works programs are affected, and I think this is to the detriment of the fishing industry.

Part of my constituency is the Sambro area where the swordfishery has developed to the point that it is the swordfishing capital of the North Atlantic. It is operated from a wharf