

*Motion for Papers*

uncertain year for those fishermen, but it has not been a year without income for them. We cannot be sure whether or not there is a serious long term effect in Long Harbour and in Placentia Bay on the marine life there. However, our scientists are quite optimistic in this regard. They have carried out a number of tests, and if there is any further evidence of pollution, we will get the company to clean it up at the company's expense, as it has done in the past.

• (5:20 p.m.)

No taxpayers' money has gone into cleaning up facilities, or cleaning up the bottom of the harbour itself. I do not think the reputation of Newfoundland fish has been seriously damaged. I am sure the hon. member for St. John's West will tell us there are individuals in the area of Placentia Bay who are very concerned about the events of the past year. It will be a considerable time before they are convinced that the situation is in fact good, that the marine life is no longer threatened by the plant and that no irreparable damage has been done. Looking back, Mr. Speaker, it can be seen that we had on our hands a very difficult situation from the point of view of the fishermen. But I think it has been handled in an efficient way, although admittedly on a hand-to-mouth basis, and the fishermen have had a reasonable income in relation to the income they have earned from the fishery in previous years.

There is the much larger question of how we are to deal with pollution in the future. I think we now know how to deal with plants making elemental phosphorus. There had been little experience in the world with such plants, and indeed no such experience in Canada. In future we must insist that phosphorus plants treat all their effluent on their own property, and that nothing leaves the plant that would in any way be deleterious to marine life. We have to treat other chemical processes in the same way. We will have to be much more attentive to future effluents. We shall have to look at plants elsewhere in the world to see if there are parallel situations, although I understand that in this particular case there was no parallel situation elsewhere.

I must return to the unsatisfactory position in which the Department of Fisheries finds itself. We do not have legislation which is in the form necessary to deal effectively with pollution ahead of the event. We do not give

[Mr. Davis.]

a licence to a firm to carry on a given practice, to install a given process. Under Canadian law the Department of Fisheries has monitored events, discussed matters and indicated to companies what was tolerable and what was not, what concentrations of material should be discharged into the marine environment and what should not. But it has not been in the position, under Canadian law, of being able to prevent an installation from taking place, or indeed to prevent a given practice being followed, unless such practice resulted in damage, and in most cases damage to the commercial fishery.

In the future, Mr. Speaker, with an amended Fisheries Act we will be able to point to standards which must be met in terms of parts per million of the effluent, effluent standards which can be shown to companies which are about to instal new plants, standards they must meet, and standards which if they are not met will lead to prosecutions by the Crown. This is the character of the amendments to the Fisheries Act which we will be bringing forward later this session.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, there was correspondence back in 1966 and 1967 concerning the setting up of this new phosphorous reduction plant in Newfoundland before construction actually began. There was correspondence which related to the possibilities of pollution. The effluent was described. In my opinion the description of the nature of the effluent was not such as to reveal what was likely to happen and did in fact happen. We learned by experience what can happen and what in fact did happen at Long Harbour. It has been unfortunate experience. It has been an extremely unfortunate experience from the point of view of the fishermen. But I think that during the short time I have been minister we have done everything we could.

The first thing we did was identify the source of the pollution. We moved to get the plant to shut down before we had a legal case, months before we had what one would call sufficient evidence for a prosecution. The company co-operated by shutting its plant down and installing all the facilities which we advised were necessary to treat the effluent on its property. In the meantime we helped to carry the fishermen over a difficult period, and in recent weeks they have been receiving compensation from the company. Whether this compensation is sufficient in the eyes of the fishermen I cannot say, but we have done something novel. The taxpayers of Canada have carried these fishermen over a difficult