

This is why I said that the battle was difficult, and I would like to thank all hon. members from eastern Quebec and the caucus who helped us throughout these years to support the rights of all Canadians, whether they live in Quebec or British Columbia.

Is not the reason for us being here, Mr. Speaker, that we may defend the rights of our constituents? We have a responsibility, as any member of the legislative assembly in Ontario, in Quebec or in New Brunswick. Every member who received a mandate from his constituents has a responsibility to defend their interests both here in Ottawa and in Quebec and this is why we, as members from Quebec, have been doing so here over the years, with the co-operation of ministers from Quebec who represent us here in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, the fishing centre development program provided for in the 1968 agreement has been a great success. Considering the delay experienced from 1968 to 1974 in the voting of funds, a 6-year delay, projects require more funds, the designs of various structures have to be reduced to comply with estimates, other projects were undertaken through stages and are not yet completed. As an illustration, we have the unloading harbour in Cloridorme. Mr. Speaker, my concern and that of my Quebec colleagues on the fisheries and forest committee are that the province of Quebec might not get its due share of estimates in the coming years for the improvement of small craft harbours. If the criteria for distributing national budgets for small craft harbours are maintained, I can see that Quebec will get just about 5 or 6 per cent of budgetary funding. As I said, the criteria were established around 1973 by the Hon. Jack Davis. Since the catch or the value of landings in Quebec is now smaller than in other provinces, our share of the budgets are much smaller than our needs. With such criteria, Mr. Speaker, havenot areas and provinces will always remain poor, and provinces where the value of landings is greater will progress at the expense of other Canadian areas. How can our fishing fleet in the Gaspé Peninsula increase, how can it have larger boats to get to the Atlantic coast when fishing harbours or industrial centres are not provided with good wharves?

Mr. Speaker, I would remind this House of a statement made by the Minister of Fisheries and Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) on January 31, 1978. Let it be said in passing that the minister, an Acadian like myself, has taken to heart the development of fisheries in eastern Quebec as much as in the Pacific. Thanks to successful negotiations with various countries at the Law of the Sea conferences in New York, Caracas and—Geneva and I see here my friend the hon. member for Prince Edward Island, we were in Geneva together, and although he is sitting on the other side of the House he has nothing but commendation for our minister from New Brunswick for the way he defended Canada's interests at the Law of the Sea conference in Geneva. Certainly the minister must be commended for all he did for eastern Quebec, for the protection and encouragement of fishermen to remain in their trade, because things were not easy some years ago when fish was

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declining and plants were operating a few months only every year.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for all he has done for fisheries in eastern Canada, particularly in Quebec. I refer to the statement he made in this House last January 31, and I quote:

It must be remembered that in 1973 the department inherited over 2,000 harbours and wharves, very large numbers of which were in dire need of repairs as a result of neglect in the past. Because of this, our programs have focused on making good this backlog of repairs and providing for only the most urgent of harbour expansions. It is only now that we are in a position to change the main thrust of our programs from repairs to that of improving, expanding and up-dating our harbours, and providing the better services needed by fishermen such as lighting, haulouts and proper work areas.

In 1973 we initiated a series of major studies to evaluate the existing fishing and recreational harbours owned by the federal government and to suggest a rationale for their development in the future. These studies were completed in 1975 and provide the basis for our ongoing plans—

Further on the minister said:

For example, expenditures in Quebec peaked during 1975-1976 and 1976-77 due to the special St. Lawrence fishing harbour development program, and have now been reduced to more modest levels.

Mr. Speaker, it is the expression "more modest" that I would like to comment on in the next few minutes. The province of Quebec has the longest shoreline in Canada. So we ask that for the coming years the government continue to set aside 15 per cent of the regular department budget to allow the province to build more recreational and fishing harbours along the St. Lawrence and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In 1974, the province of Quebec got 14 per cent of the national budget for small craft harbours. This distribution seems perfectly logical. However the minister expects a reduction of expenses to a more modest level compared to 1975, 1976 and 1977, but we do not accept these cuts. They should not be lower than 15 per cent as it was for fiscal year 1974-75. We shall not accept that our percentage of the budget be reduced to 6 per cent only.

Mr. Speaker, as I said on several occasions, several structures show an urgent need for repairs and I am thinking of those located in the communities of L'Anse-à-Valleau, St-Joachim de Tourelles, Ste-Anne-des-Monts, Ste-Thérèse-de-Gaspé and L'Anse-à-Brillant and so on. The works undertaken in the fishing centres and unloading harbours of Cloridorme, Newport, Grande-Rivière and Rivière-aux-Renards should also be completed. I remain very optimistic about the future of fishing activities in the Gaspé Peninsula on account of the newly adopted 200-mile limit as well as the fishing regulations imposed for certain species a few years ago by the minister. But since we have a very high rate of unemployment in the Gaspé Peninsula and that many young people would like to take over the job of their fathers and ancestors as fishermen, we want to give the Gaspé Peninsula and eastern Quebec adequate and fully equipped facilities to accommodate these new fishermen.

I know that the minister is quite aware of the needs of the Gaspé Peninsula and I trust his goodwill and co-operation in that respect so that the province of Quebec may get its fair share of the estimates adopted for the forthcoming years.