

For this reason, honourable senators, I did not want to miss this opportunity, before third reading of the Bill, to express the views held in Quebec on the subject of fisheries. The fishing industry in Quebec is facing hard times. It is my belief that the Bill now before us is not going to solve our problems. If it does help my friends, the honourable senators from Newfoundland and the Atlantic Provinces, so be it, and I for one will raise no objection to the Bill. But it was my duty this morning to suggest to the House that this Bill will fall short of solving our problems.

I am not asking from the sponsor of this Bill, who delivered an excellent speech last night, an answer to all of my questions. I simply would like him to give his Minister of Fisheries and Oceans this message from a senator from Quebec who is not happy about this Bill. It will not solve our problems. But to help my friends from the Atlantic area and Newfoundland, I will support it.

[English]

● (1150)

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My honourable friend is indicating that he wishes to speak. If he does so, I would like him to take precedence because then we could alternate. He cannot close the debate, since there is no closing of the debate on third reading. He can just speak once. Is my friend going to speak?

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Senator Petten will speak later.

Senator Roblin: In that case, I shall proceed.

The course of this bill through the house has demonstrated that there are many senators who have a deep knowledge of and abiding interest in the problems this bill deals with, and I listened with much pleasure and interest during the debate, particularly on second reading, to those opinions and was pleased to note that at least in my party, there were a number of genuine experts, in the persons of Senators Marshall, Doody, Phillips and Macdonald, and now, on the constitutional issue, my friend Senator Asselin. I want it to be clearly understood, however, that when I contribute to this debate, it is not because I know anything about fish, because, while subjects like the Crow and the sale of wheat abroad attract my primary attention, I am a newcomer to the fish business. Sometimes I eat it; sometimes I catch it, but as to the economics of it in western and eastern Canada, I am remarkably uninformed.

Nevertheless, I have something to say about this bill, regardless of what it deals with, because it seems to me that it presents new principles in respect of government intervention into the economic sector and into the private sector that are, perhaps, worth noting and underlining; they may, it is to be hoped, be setting some new standards by which government economic intervention can be measured. I am one who has opposed quite strenuously most of the bail-out operations we have seen from time to time on the grounds that, while they make good short-run politics, they make bad long-run economics and usually perpetuate themselves indefinitely into the

future, avoid dealing with the problems in question, increase the cost of living and generally are not a productive way to deal with change in economic circumstances. Flexibility and change will have to be the keywords of those who take an interest in the economic policy of the country—and I have not seen that point of view expressed, as I would like to have seen it, in many of the bail-out operations that we have seen from time to time.

In this bill, there is substantial new ground that has opened, and I am glad to see it. I feel free to vote for the legislation that is before us now, and one of the reasons why I do so is that the plan incorporated in this bill is market-driven; that is, it is intended that the industry from now on will respond to the market pressures and the market signals which are the best indications we have as to how management should proceed in the fishing business or in anything else. That seems to me to be a principle that we could well enshrine in most of the activities that government undertakes in the field of economic intervention.

It is made particularly clear in the bill that this is a bill based on economic principles, because it recognizes that there are other principles to be considered in public activities. One of them is the social principle.

We have seen in the activities at Devco in Cape Breton what trouble can arise when the economic principles and social requirements are mixed up in the same basket. That is one of the reasons, I think, for the seemingly never-ending series of deficits that we have down there.

In this bill, it is made perfectly clear that if a government wishes to do something under the auspices of this bill that is motivated for social reasons—and there may be plenty of good social reasons that would motivate governments—they are not to be charged against the fishing industry as such or against these companies in particular. That is the important principle. This fishing reform is to operate on economic principles alone, and if the Government of Newfoundland or the Government of Canada or anyone else wants to keep a plant open for social reasons or do anything else for social reasons, which, in themselves, may be well-grounded, the cost of the social initiative will not be borne by these companies or by the fishing industry but by the general exchequer. I think that is a good thing to do and a sound principle. Oftentimes, governments are justified in having social goals which are different from economic goals, but I think it is the better part of wisdom to see that they are not charged against the activities of economic concerns.

I think that this clear differentiation between the market-driven thrust of the fishing business and what may prove, in the event, to be desirable social policies that cost money should be completely separated. The fishery should be run on an economic basis and the social policies, whatever they may be, should not be charged against it but should indeed be separately budgeted by the authorities that wish to employ them.

The second thing that I like about this bill is that it makes clear from the beginning that the aim is to privatize this industry once again.

[Senator Asselin.]