

*Government Organization*

Nevertheless, I am pleased to note that the government has finally decided to re-establish a separate department of fisheries called the department of fisheries and oceans. The peril, however, in bringing forward this measure in an omnibus bill is that it could needlessly be delayed because of problems associated with other parts of it. In our view the part of Bill C-35 dealing with the establishment of a department of fisheries and oceans should have been brought forward separately and divorced from the other parts of the bill.

Actually, we should not be discussing the re-establishment of a separate department of fisheries at all. The fact that we are discussing this matter is a direct result of the Liberal government's having needlessly ended the existence of the department of fisheries in 1970. Having made that change, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) soon suffered some political remorse over what he had done because in the 1974 election campaign he promised to establish a separate department of fisheries. Five long years later it appears that this promise is finally coming to fruition. I add that this is somewhat typical of Liberal promises, especially campaign promises; they are long on words and short on action.

It should also be noted that this bill is very similar to Bill C-65, which was very hurriedly introduced on the second last sitting day before last summer's recess. Obviously, the Prime Minister wanted to place that bill on the record in case he decided to call a fall election. However, things then started to happen. We had a Gallup poll, we had a Goldfarb poll, we had the North Pole, the South Pole and the "roly-pol". All these polls seemed to frighten the Prime Minister out of his wits, and when he could not find the courage to call an election, what did he do? Did his government introduce his bill at the first opportunity? It did not. It delayed action for another five months.

In fact, further delays could result from the government's seeing fit to introduce an omnibus bill dealing not only with the re-establishment of a separate department of fisheries, but also with the employees of Canada Patents and Development Limited, the representation commissioner, the Medical Research Council, the National Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, parliamentary secretaries and the Department of the Environment. I submit that these measures could well have been dealt with in a separate bill.

It should also be recognized that the establishment of the new department will not in itself be a cure-all for all the problems which presently plague Canada's fishing industry. The proposal by our lead speaker that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry is one that I endorse. I think various proposals in the bill would be more acceptable if the debate were carried out in that particular committee, since those members of the Commons who have expertise in fisheries and the environment generally are present at the meetings of that committee. So I think it would help bring forth a better bill. This is a proposal I endorse and throw out for consideration by the government.

● (1640)

The measure of success of any government policy cannot be based upon the government's view of things, but rather upon the view of others, especially those directly involved in the industry. This leads us to ask how the government's fisheries policy is faring. In the letter to the Prime Minister of September 22, 1978, the Fisheries Council of Canada stated:

We are deeply concerned that the potential of our industry will not be realized because your approach to the country's economic problems is not being followed in respect to fisheries. In fact in fisheries the government's approach is one of increasing intervention and opposition to the private sector.

To realize the opportunities, it is necessary to establish a continuity of investment. As Mr. Chrétien has put it, encourage risk taking and willingness to spend in the private sector that is essential to get the economy growing faster.

But the council points out that this depends in turn to a large extent on the creation and maintenance by government of a favourable climate for future investment.

The letter goes on to say that the council regrets the government's approach to fisheries is not creating a favourable climate for long-term investment, and they itemize some of the main problems as follows. First is the refusal of the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) to issue to Canadians licences for freezer factory vessels. This is particularly difficult to understand when such Canadian vessels would replace only foreign effort and would not reduce by a single pound the existing catch of any Canadian fisherman. Second are the unclear and unwise policies in such areas as ownership of vessels; and third, the ad hoc manipulation of the fisheries resource instead of forward planning for development.

It is my understanding that this letter was almost completely ignored by our Prime Minister. He sent only a pro forma reply thanking the fisheries council for its views. I submit that the time is long past for nice words of gratitude. I submit that what is needed now is action, or otherwise the Canadian fishing industry will lose the optimum benefits of the 200-mile limit which we on this side have originally proposed.

The fisheries council points out that the federal government has the complete responsibility for the management of the fisheries resource and that lack of jurisdiction over the stocks in the past has handicapped the ability of Canadian scientists and resource managers to carry out their mandate. However, the council makes the point that the scientists are now in a position to manage properly, but they have much to do in gathering knowledge of stock size and population dynamics. This is the area where the federal government has the responsibility and the expertise, and it is here that it should be directing its efforts rather than in commercial activities which must be the responsibility of the private sector.

I endorse those views of the council on behalf of the fishermen. What was the government's response to this important recommendation? Almost at the same time that it was being made, the government announced its decision to close down the Halifax fisheries laboratory, effective April 1, 1979, and its plan to discontinue all programs involved in research oriented toward the secondary fishing sector; that is, fish processing. The stupidity of this move became evident finally