

Fisheries Development Act

We in North America have been very slow to move away from the original pioneer attitude where it was thought that the bounty of nature was almost unlimited and we could be very prodigal and wasteful in its exploitation. We are now learning, none too soon, that that is not the case. We must exploit these living resources carefully in order to maximize their use and minimize damage to them so there will be a continuous resource. Our renewable resources must be husbanded and harvested in the best possible way.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the fisheries on the east coast are chiefly carried on by people who settled there historically for the purpose of making their living in that way. There is an important sociological aspect to this question. The Department of Fisheries should be extremely careful in administering this and other acts so that the good sense of the fishermen can be part of the input into every new course of action taken by the government. In this connection there is dire need for improvement to small boat harbours, especially those in eastern Canada. I and many inshore fishermen are rather disappointed at the snail's pace at which this is taking place, because small boat harbours have been starved of funds for a number of years. This situation should be rectified as speedily as possible.

I have only one further comment to make, Mr. Speaker. I hope that when this amendment is being administered, it will be administered jointly with the provincial governments concerned in the hope that they will augment the grants made to the fishermen concerned. When one is modifying a boat rather than building a new one, he can invest quite a lot of money without increasing the boat's capital worth. Therefore, I think it is necessary for the aid to apply to a higher percentage of such cost. As far as I can see, no provision is made for such a percentage increase in this bill, but I hope that jointly with the provincial governments a way can be found to increase where necessary the assistance as a percentage of the over-all cost so that the fisherman's share will not be so high. Otherwise, I doubt whether desirable modifications will ever be made to some fishing craft.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) in connection with this bill. Hon. members may have forgotten—this brings me back to an old pastime, rather than breaking completely new ground—that some five years ago I had the responsibility of piloting through the House the bill which created the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation; so I am at least back in the business once again.

I was a little disappointed to hear the comments of the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) regarding the absence of the minister and his parliamentary secretary. As hon. members know, quite often the business before the House on a particular afternoon—and I think it is true in this case—is as much arranged to suit the convenience and wishes of members of other parties as it is to suit the wishes of the government. That is sometimes done even though the minister is not available, if the opposition have strong wishes in this regard. It is only fair to observe that this is often the case. Therefore, remarks about absences of members are a little ill-received. In this

[Mr. MacLean.]

particular case the Minister of Fisheries is on his way to address the Pipeline Contractors' Association, and the parliamentary secretary is representing his minister at the third international environment conference in Kenya. As hon. members will realize, they are properly about the business of the Department of the Environment and Fisheries and for that reason cannot be here.

I will try very briefly to answer at least a few of the relevant questions raised by hon. members who roamed a little over other subjects in the field of fisheries. In answer to the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), the department is moving forward with its quality improvement programs. In the 1974-75 estimates there is provision for a program for fish-chilling and icing which is national in scope. It is, therefore, part of the over-all program. I am happy to tell the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) that if a British Columbia fisherman has a vessel which can be converted for use in an area of fisheries that is underutilized, he can presumably qualify for assistance under this program.

The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Carter) raised a couple of questions about the nature of the program. Basically, the answer is that the regulations which will be established under the act will allow for some of the matters about which he is concerned, such as improving the engines of fishing craft. The hon. member for St. John's West also mentioned an upper limit. While at this point in time no upper limit has been set, this likely will be done in connection with the regulations which are being drafted. It is probably undesirable to make this an open-ended program, but that matter has not been finally determined: the regulations have not yet been drafted.

I was very pleased to hear the suggestion of the hon. member for Malpeque (Mr. MacLean) that we might now proceed with second reading of this bill and speed its progress through the House so that this amendment, with its own important significance, can become a part of our law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the House is ready for the question, the Chair will proceed to put it. Earlier today the hon. member for Meadow Lake (Mr. Nesdoly) suggested, on a point of order, that the bill be considered in committee of the whole rather than being referred to the standing committee. This, of course, would require unanimous consent. If there were unanimous consent, the motion would be varied.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, speaking for the official opposition, we would be agreeable to that. We are anxious to see the matter finalized as quickly as possible.

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, if the bill is put to the committee of the whole and given third reading I assume it will be done on the basis that we have had all the debate necessary and it will be passed right through the House.

● (1550)

Mr. Crouse: Having led off the debate for the official opposition on this measure, may I say we are prepared to give the bill third reading at this time in order that the benefits which could accrue to fishermen and processors