

Fisheries Improvement Loans Act

salmonid enhancement. We on the west coast, and I guess everywhere else in Canada, get magnificent bulletins on a regular basis on the salmonid enhancement program. I would like to see some fundamental things take place that will enhance and improve that resource. If we are going to see that, and in fact if we are going to have in place the program announced back in the Thirtieth Parliament, we must have advanced research or advanced knowledge used in the protection of the feeder species upon which that salmon industry relies as the salmon return to the spawning grounds.

The minister would be well advised to take a bit of a holiday on the west coast, perhaps talk to some of the people in the fisheries service who are on the frontiers of that service up the coast, and talk to some of the fishermen during those periods when there is closure on the docks, as I am sure he would find it an amazing experience and would get a real feeling of the importance of this to the community.

The 20-inch limit, which I understand has been postponed or put in limbo for awhile, is of very real concern to a lot of people. We do not understand why the officials would even recommend that sport fishermen who catch a salmon species of less than 20 inches throw it back into the water. That to us is a waste. We would like to know what the scientific analysis or reasoning is behind even thinking that such a method is a sensible way of protecting the chinook species, if that is the reason for that type of threatened legislation.

● (1530)

That about wraps up the comments I wanted to make on Bill C-28. I took forward to receiving some answers from the minister in his wrap-up comments.

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my reason for participating in this debate is based on the fact that this bill has a very direct bearing on my riding. I have no great expertise in this area, although I have had an opportunity to observe this industry in operation over a long period of time and to draw basic conclusions about how a bill such as the one before the House today affects the people who live and work in my riding. In reference to the previous speaker, my riding is adjacent to his riding and covers more than half the coast of British Columbia. The riding of the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) covers the rest of the coast of British Columbia.

Every community in this area is vitally affected by this bill. This particular industry is presently in chaos and many people who live and work along the coast of British Columbia have little confidence in the industry. What little confidence there is held with uncertainty. The people who invest in and try to earn a living from the industry live from hand to mouth on a daily basis. It is a very desperate situation.

I would like to outline a few areas of particular concern to me. The major area is corporate concentration, which I see taking place right now. This particular legislation, in a very small way, according to my interpretations, will foster corporate concentration. Another area of concern to me is management of the industry.

First, I would like to discuss corporate concentration. Historically, the coast of British Columbia has had as its major industries fisheries and forestry. Up and down the coast for some 350 miles of my riding, there were once numerous small communities which thrived on logging and the catching and processing of fish. Then came the development of large fishing companies such as B.C. Packers and the Canadian Fish Company, which are basically foreign operations. For example, Garfield Weston and the New England Fish Company own the Canadian Fish Company.

These companies operate on the coast of British Columbia much like a feudal system. They own the major fleets, they provide the financing to put people in vessels to catch fish and they control the buying, the processors, the processing and ultimately the market. As the control by these companies developed, they moved to Vancouver. Loans and other forms of encouragement from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the natural process of monopoly rationalization brought about the move. As a result of this move, the coast of British Columbia became depopulated. Like so many other resource boom-and-bust industries, people came out of the major centres such as Vancouver, moved on to the coast and shared in the harvesting of this resource.

However, one group of people left behind in this depopulation process was the Indians. Many of the Indian communities today are in social and economic chaos. They are in that position due largely to the operations of the fishing companies and the corporate concentration of that industry. These companies did not consider the interests of the people of British Columbia, particularly the interests of the people who lived in the small communities along the coast. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, through its short-sighted and inadequate programs, such as the one before the House now, has aided and abetted this situation.

In the recent past, from the late 1950s, changes have been occurring in the industry. Recently we saw the Canada Fish Company fall not by the wayside, but sold to B.C. Packers, which is Garfield Weston's jewel. They have taken over many of the assets of Canada Fish Company and, as a result, part of that market. They will probably gain the rest of it. There is a very real concern that the move toward monopoly control is intensifying. This bill will assist that development.

In the recent past, Japanese entrepreneurs have intruded into the fishing industry in British Columbia. This intrusion is of great concern to the people in the industry because the Japanese appear to be moving into areas in which the Canada Fish Company moved and in which many of the small Canadian enterprises have been trying to establish their presence at all levels of harvesting, processing and marketing.

As these Japanese companies begin to control the industry along the coast of British Columbia, there is the fear that the depopulating process will increase and that they will eventually have a monopoly. Many people who live in these small communities up and down the coast of British Columbia are very concerned about what the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc) has in mind for the future. They want to know