

Fishing and Recreational Harbours

Ministers are always looking for ideas. The river guardians know the small craft harbours in their area. If they were hired as guardian wharfingers, they could serve a dual purpose. They would provide a benefit to the fishermen and be cost effective. The guardians and wardens should be hired on a year round basis to carry out this double job. The minister mentioned at committee that this might be a good idea.

I wrote to the minister with regard to the vital necessity of increasing surveillance and control over the rivers which are being poached to the detriment of the legitimate angler. In some cases it resulted in the season being closed, and others the season was restricted. A part of our society was destroyed.

I hope the minister will give serious consideration to the excellent points made by the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) and others of my colleagues who are interested in this bill and in the changes that are taking place. However, we must ensure that it is done in a cost effective way for the benefit of the fishermen and the economy as well as providing good development policies for the benefit of the country.

● (1522)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased to take part in the consideration of Bill C-2 on third reading. Obviously, it is quite a controversial issue and on several occasions I intervened during the study of the bill in committee to echo some comments made to me by fishermen and fishery workers of the Gaspé Peninsula. More particularly on November 10, 1977 when the bill was considered in committee, I put a question to the director of the Small Craft Harbours Branch and to the legal advisers about the responsibility of Quebec in that matter. My question which appears on page 126 reads as follows:

Does Bill C-2 conform to the agreement or to the spirit of the agreement signed in 1922 between the federal government and Quebec assuring the transfer of certain responsibilities in the area of commercial fishing to the province of Quebec?

Mr. Reid replied, and I quote:

Mr. Chairman, the responsibility for fishing harbours, and their construction and maintenance, was not part of the agreement in 1922. The responsibility for fishing harbours, their maintenance, their control, their administration, their repairs, remains exclusively the responsibility of the federal government—commercial fishing harbours.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is pursuant to the terms of the British North America Act that the federal government has jurisdiction over the construction, maintenance and repair of commercial fishing harbours in the province of Quebec as in every other province in Canada. This bill, now before the House for third reading, will clear up the use of fishing ports because, at times, commercial fishermen find it difficult to moor their boats, pleasure crafts crowding most of the facilities.

Nowadays fishing boats are becoming larger and larger and extremely well equipped. We should set well protected facilities and we require increasingly higher credits for building wharves, breakwaters and harbours. Who should pay for these facilities and these works? Mr. Speaker, the federal government did its large share and will continue to do so in the

[Mr. Marshall.]

future, and the bill provides for the imposition of berthing fees for boat owners who will have to use these facilities. Several people will say, and several hon. members repeated this here in the House, that this is a new financial burden which we impose on fishermen both in Quebec and in the other provinces.

But I must say, Mr. Speaker, that Quebec fishermen do not pay any berthing fees at the moment although most commercial fishermen do in other provinces. So this new legislation will put the province of Quebec on an equal footing with the other provinces of Canada. To eliminate the discrimination that has been going on for some time and to get a modest revenue for the administration of fishing harbours, this bill provides for the implementation of limited, easy to apply regulations taking into account regional disparities. So fishermen in the Gaspé area will be paying a lower berthing fee than commercial fishermen in British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I would like to take a few minutes of the time of the House to review briefly the distribution of budgetary allocations and the needs of the Gaspé area with respect to fishing harbours as well as for the rest of the province of Quebec, particularly on the shoreline of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the river. According to my estimates, the province of Quebec received a very low portion of the budget revenues for the construction of fishing harbours prior to the 1970s—and I did say prior to the 1970s. It was impossible to determine the amount of supplies used for fishing harbours and the budget was administered by the Department of Public Works and included fishing harbours as well as commercial wharves. It was only in 1972 that the government established two administrative levels: one for commercial wharves and the other for fishing and small craft harbours. The Department of the Environment is responsible for the administration of fishing and recreational harbours.

Let us review for a moment the amounts received by the province out of the budget for small craft harbours since 1973: \$899,500 for fiscal year 1973-74 or 4 per cent of the national budget. In 1974-75, \$4,361,800 or 14 per cent of the national budget. In 1975-76, \$10,205,600 or 35 per cent of the national budget. In 1976-77, \$5,754,000 or 20 per cent of the budget; 1977-78, \$4,800,000 or 6 per cent of the national budget for small craft harbours. Mr. Speaker, it is after a long battle with the former minister of fisheries and environment, the Hon. Jack Davis, which battle was led jointly by hon. members from Gaspé, Bonaventure and the Magdalen Islands—

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): —also from New Brunswick.

Mr. Cyr: —Yes, from New Brunswick also, as the minister just mentioned. I was saying that we fought this battle to obtain a special fund of \$10 million to meet the commitments made in 1968 by the federal government and the Quebec government under the eastern Quebec economic development agreement to provide the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands with adequate fishing harbours and wharves.

The Hon. Jack Davis, like many department officials, did not know much about the needs of the province of Quebec.