

Charlevoix about federal-provincial relations in this respect, I would say that things are in a pretty bad way.

I am not blaming anyone, nor am I criticizing the attitude of the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Honourable Pierre De Bané, or the decisions the Quebec Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Garon, seems to be making that stress the province's jurisdiction over fisheries.

The fact remains that in Quebec, the fisheries industry and the fishermen themselves are in financial trouble. I think everyone is aware of the problems experienced by the Société des Pêcheurs unis. They are also aware of the representations made by the Compagnie des Pêcheurs unis—

Hon. Léopold Langlois: The name is Coopérative des Pêcheurs unis.

Senator Asselin: I want to thank Senator Langlois, who has lived in the area for a long time and is certainly more familiar than I am with the co-operative on the Lower St. Lawrence.

In any case, we know that, over the objections of Quebec, the federal Government has invested certain sums of money to try to buy back the assets of the Coopérative des Pêcheurs unis which was almost bankrupt, and that shareholders of the co-operative were the Fédération des Caisses Desjardins, the Banque Nationale and the Province of Quebec, which had invested \$5 million. No agreement was reached on how to apportion the assets resulting from the bankruptcy of the Coopérative des Pêcheurs unis. It is claimed that Minister De Bané found a formula that included the Banque Nationale, the Fédération des Caisses Desjardins, plus the \$1.2 million invested by the fishermen themselves. We are told that Mr. De Bané proposed a formula under which the federal Government would purchase the assets and convert them into shares. The federal Government would give the fishermen shares in return for the amounts they had invested in the co-operative.

All this is not very clear and raises major problems and a number of questions. The Opposition was well represented on the committee that studied Bill C-170. Our party was represented by Senators Phillips, Muir, Doody and Marshall. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister is delaying the appointment of other senators from Quebec who would support our cause. There are not enough of us. There are only two or three senators from Quebec to do all the work on all committees. Nevertheless, a Liberal senator from Quebec, Senator Wood, asked the Minister how he was going to use this Bill to solve the problems of the fishing industry in Quebec. The committee's official proceedings have not yet been published, but this morning I was able to get an unrevised copy. I skimmed through the answer Minister De Bané gave to Senator Wood. His answer was evasive and confused, and supported the status quo. We do not see how, in a matter of months or even years, there could be any agreement between the federal Government and the Government of the Province of Quebec regarding the fishing industry in that Province. In fact, Senator Wood, after the Minister's lengthy, evasive and confused explanation, said the following:

[English]

You have not really answered my question.

[Translation]

She was right, because the Minister seemed reluctant to come to grips with the problem and tell the Committee that the Bill would resolve current problems in the fishing industry in Quebec. The trouble is that right now Quebec is trying to reaffirm its jurisdiction over fisheries within its territory. Quebec intends to pass legislation in the provincial legislature that would oblige Quebec fishermen, if they want to have the right to fish in Quebec waters, to carry a provincial fishing licence. Through this legislation, which has been tabled in the National Assembly, Quebec is challenging the constitutional definition of federal and provincial jurisdiction over fishing rights. If the Bill is passed, the Government of Quebec will be showing its opposition to the federal Government's attitude and interference in the fisheries industry in Quebec. The Members of the official Opposition in Quebec have joined Government members in saying that the federal Government is seriously encroaching on the fisheries sector in Quebec. I am not in a position to judge, I have not studied the Bill carefully enough and in any case I am not here to discuss the matter from a constitutional point of view. Perhaps that can be done later but, as a Quebecer, I have serious reservations when I say that Bill C-170 will not signal the end of the current dispute between the federal government and the Province of Quebec about fisheries.

Somebody might suggest that I should have made that speech on second reading, and then met with the minister to ask him some questions. This problem has been on-going for months and months. Both the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the provincial minister, Mr. Garon, are making ultimatums, but fishermen are the victims. The Government of Quebec is complaining about the federal government's interference in the Pêcheurs unis co-operative. The provincial government will lose \$5 million, as will the Banque Provinciale and the Fédération des Caisses Desjardins, so the federal government said that it will compensate them by giving them shares worth as much as they have invested. Apparently, a similar offer has not been made to the Government of Quebec.

That is a major aspect of the problem of fisheries in Quebec, yet it has not been addressed and the bill before us does nothing to solve the issue I have just raised. However, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has stated that the whole of the fishing industry in Quebec is in agreement with him. They would like to get more grants from the Canadian Government, but also we have another story from the independent fishermen. As Senator Thériault pointed out last evening in his speech, the independent fishermen are scared to death at the idea of having to compete with those huge companies which the Canadian Government intends to set up and fund with quite sizable grants.

In my view, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans did not address those questions in Committee, according to the record I have here. In any case, their concerns are justified.