

Government Organization Act, 1970

The assumption by the minister of the role of determining the function and philosophy of co-operative associations is an indication that he is not really interested in listening to common sense and reason, but only in imposing upon the fishing industry a particular idea and a particular program whether or not it works. This is a minister who believes in change by experimentation rather than by experience. He went on to take extracts from the co-operative's letter and distort the meaning. In this way he manifests his arrogance which I suggest is inherent in his letter to the fishermen.

The minister went on to state, in his letter of the 27th, that the association had ignored any reference to the heavy subsidies which individual fishermen received by way of unemployment insurance. Let me point out a few facts about unemployment insurance for fishermen. Unemployment insurance came into effect for fishermen as a Liberal party election gambit a few years ago when Jimmy Sinclair, father of the Prime Minister's wife, was Minister of Fisheries. That minister was attempting to meet the desires of fishermen on the west coast in order to be elected. This was not done with any real purpose of providing unemployment insurance benefits for fishermen that was meaningful or worth-while.

In addition to that, the present Minister of Fisheries is a member of a cabinet which has endorsed this program. The unemployment insurance bill currently before the House contains a provision similar to the earlier provision: it is to be applied to fishermen and continued. There has been no attempt on the part of the government to work out a program which might be successful, reasonable or helpful so far as fishermen are concerned in terms of group insurance, price stability or anything of that sort. The Minister of Fisheries has referred to a sort of inherent fisheries subsidy. Of course, this cannot properly be referred to as such.

• (3:50 p.m.)

There is no need to read further from this correspondence, but the whole tenure of the minister's letter, I submit, casts grave doubt in the minds of many fishermen that he is really concerned about human beings in this program of licence limitation. I point out that the idea and concept of a licence limitation program as conceived by the minister—this is where a great deal of objection and confusion comes in—was never introduced by way of formal regulation by Order in Council; it was instituted and announced to the fishermen a few years ago by a press release of the minister. Then various alterations, refinements and adjustments to the original plan were announced simply by press releases and statements of the minister. Every time the fishermen on the west coast who are engaged in the salmon industry understood what the minister was proposing in terms of a licence limitation program, and began to appreciate what he was trying to get at in order to see whether or not they wanted to fit within it at all, he changed it by another press release.

It is that sort of arrogant, dictatorial attitude which has contributed to the confusion and the problems of the fishermen as well as the concern they have in respect of

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

their livelihood being tampered and experimented with to suit some concept of the minister. Within the Fisheries Act there is a section—I presume it is the section under which the minister operates, section 7—which provides that the minister in his absolute discretion can issue licences for fisheries for any period not exceeding nine years. I have quickly referred to the provision without reading the whole section. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) has a bill on the Order Paper at the moment to repeal that section and to indicate that the issuance of licences should be done in the normal way by Order in Council, by regulation, so that people in the fishing industry would have an opportunity to get to the government and see that things are done in an orderly fashion, and so that the minister's absolute discretion to issue licences as he sees fit is abolished.

Last session when the Fisheries Act was being amended an attempt was made to remove that particular section. The minister objected to this and the government objected to removing this power of the minister to deal with the lives of the fishermen as he decided proper on the basis of some thought in the minister's mind when he arose in the morning, based on whether he had a good or a bad preceding evening. On a number of occasions we have asked that the licence program idea of the minister be referred to the standing committee for examination, so that fishermen could come to the committee and express their views about it. The minister, in response to a question in the House, was guilty of a barefaced falsehood when he said, "Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will gladly refer that to the committee". Then he sat down and did nothing more about it, in an attempt to cover up and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Morison) is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Morison: Mr. Speaker, it is all very well to make personal attacks within parliamentary language, but I submit the hon. member has taken very great latitude in saying that another member has been guilty of a barefaced fabrication of the facts. I respectfully submit that those remarks should be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to speak to the point of order? If not, the Chair is prepared to rule on it.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): I have no intention of speaking to the point of order. I would not dignify it as such.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair would only say, in respect of the point of order, that the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) did not, as I understood him, impute any motives to the minister. He did not suggest that the minister had said anything in a deliberate manner. While the words may have been very strong, he did not indicate any deliberateness to convey wrong information to hon. members or to the public.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, if it will please the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Morison), I will