

that, let me tell you that I agree in principle with what I believe the Parliamentary Secretary will be doing in a few minutes, referring the matter to the Standing Committee.

I represent a riding which covers two thirds of the Province of Manitoba and which has many commercial fishermen. By virtue of the fact they all fish in fresh water, they sell their products through the FFMC. In the main they are very satisfied with that corporation. When there was an attempt by a previous Conservative Government in the Province of Manitoba to look at ways of changing the system, trying to bow out of the FFMC system, the fishermen in northern Manitoba, about 95 per cent of which are native, said no. That was done during the 1980 federal election and I stood with the fishermen in my riding and said "if I am elected, I will be there supporting the FFMC". I also said and I say now that the corporation is far from perfect.

I believe there are some officials from the Department upstairs listening at this time and they will be aware that there have been many complaints about the system. There are problems with it, just as there are problems with any system of marketing fish in this and other nations. The Hon. Member who spoke on behalf of the Liberal Party will recognize, being from Atlantic Canada, that there are many problems in the fishing industry there. There are many problems in the industry in western Canada. This is so even in some parts of this nation the marketing is done by private enterprise. So, it is not a matter of public versus private enterprise. Some people would like it to be an ideological debate, but it is not. It is not a matter of the FFMC having the monopoly and some people object to monopolies.

One of the problems we face is that regardless of where you fish, the prices are not high and costs are increasing. The increase in the cost of gas resulting from the recent Budget is not going to make life much easier for fishermen. It will make it more difficult for fishermen, especially in remote communities. As the price of gas goes up, obviously it is more expensive to operate. As well, it means that all goods shipped in to the fishermen are going to be that much more expensive.

I welcome the idea that this whole matter will be referred to committee and I hope to have a chance to participate on behalf of our caucus on that committee. I would also hope that in doing a thorough study, the committee will look at ways of travelling to where the fishermen live and work so we can see firsthand what the problems are. As I said in debate yesterday on northern transportation, the Hon. Member for Nunatsiak (Mr. Suluk) put forward a motion that the Standing Committee on Transport should travel and look at the problems that people of the north face regarding transportation.

I believe that the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry should do the same thing and listen to the people actually engaged in fishing. We should listen to the type of problems they face and the suggestions they may make concerning improving their situation. I recognize that fishermen will not speak with one voice. Like farmers, miners, labourers and businessmen, they do not always agree on what is the most perfect solution for their industry, but I think if we as Mem-

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bers of Parliament travel to those areas, we will hear for ourselves what people are saying. We will have some understanding of what the problems are.

We will not have this just by reading a report. We will not understand it by just listening to the FFMC officials testify in the standing committee once a year as they do at the present time. It is better for us to be out there and talk about the problems resulting from the high cost of transportation, from the fact we do not have processing stations in northern Manitoba and other parts of the north. We can talk about the problems they have with the fact that much of the fish they catch cannot be sold, whether through the FFMC or any other organization, because there is no market. Perhaps, after going through that process, we can come up with some changes to the FFMC which would satisfy the people involved.

One suggestion I would like to make at this time, and hopefully the committee would consider it, is that we make sure the fishermen themselves are actually on the board of directors in some numbers in order to have some effect on the direction and decisions made by the board. Right now the board of directors are not involved in the fishing industry themselves, basically. There is an advisory body representing the fishermen which gives advice to the board of directors, but that is not the same as having representatives of the fishermen on the board. If we made that one change so that fishermen felt they had some stake in the decision making, it would satisfy a lot of the fishermen in my area. They would be able to help determine price and the assistance the corporation gives to fishermen. They would be able to help plan the marketing and processing strategy, and deal with initial and final prices paid to the fishermen. That is not a new concept. We accepted that concept in the Wheat Board. We allow representatives of the farmers to be elected to the Wheat Board to help determine the decisions of that institution. I think that fishermen of freshwater fish would appreciate having that same input into their future and industry.

● (1630)

I could go on at some length talking about specific problems. I could spend a lot of time talking about the problems in my own riding, the fact that we do not have processing there, and the fact that most of the lakes are not connected to highways. I could talk about the disastrous effect of the last Budget on the fishermen in my riding because of the increase in the cost of fuel. However, I do not think that would serve any particular purpose at this time. I am going to sit down, but as I said at the outset, I would like to indicate my support for the proposal, which I believe we will be hearing in the next few minutes, to send this whole subject matter to the standing committee for further review and, hopefully, to travel across the country to allow the people who are actually fishing to speak to the Members of Parliament.

**Mr. Mel Gass (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for introducing this Bill. It gives us a rare opportunity to address the freshwater fishery and the problems