

Fisheries Act

Department of Fisheries and Oceans to regulate the fishery and to allocate it among the various user groups, and to have this absolute power over the capacity of individuals and communities to earn a living. Wouldn't it be nice, Mr. Speaker, if government approached the area of the fisheries in such a way that it came before this Parliament and said: "We need authority to manage the resource, to ensure conservation and fairness in the allocation of the resource among the various groups, and to show you our commitment to fairness we will lay out guidelines under which the people in the fisheries will be treated fairly"? Why not have a Bill of Rights for fishermen, Mr. Speaker, instead of a request for a blanket authority?

When I was a child, Mr. Speaker, I lived on an island on Lake Winnipeg. The community in which I grew up was a fishing community. Everyone there made their living through the fishery, so I have some idea of what it is like to be dependent upon this resource for one's income. I also have some awareness, at least from a Manitoban perspective, of how the fishermen view the officials who are involved in managing the resource.

I mention this, Mr. Speaker, because I feel that if over the years a relationship of trust had been built up between the fishermen and the Department based on actual experience, it would be more credible for the Minister to come before this House and ask for such wide-sweeping authority for his officials to regulate this industry. But I know from my own experience that the perception—I will not make the case whether or not that perception is completely accurate—among small fishing communities, certainly in Manitoba, is often that the officials who are involved in managing the resource do it in a way that at least appears to be arbitrary and that they do not take into account the real and practical aspects of making a living from fishing. Often the regulations become obstacles to a person making his living.

In fact, in northern Manitoba up until now the community of Norway House, which is a small native community located right on the lake, has no access to the fishery and they have had no adequate explanation as to why they have not. Officials involved in the management of the fishery are often viewed in a less than favourable light, so to ask for complete authority for those officials to regulate the fisheries without laying out the guidelines as to how this will be done to ensure it will be done fairly is not reasonable. It is asking too much.

We would be willing to give this blanket authority to the Government, this absolute power to regulate the fishery in any way it wants, if the Canadian people could say with some confidence that they trusted this Government unequivocally, without question. If the Canadian people could say that their trust in this Government was such that they believed it would fulfil all of the promises it made, then perhaps we could say on their behalf: "We are glad to give you this blanket authority because we know from experience that you won't in any way abuse that authority".

But if we are to give the Government the authority to manage the fishery on the basis of trust, then we have to ask

ourselves what has been our experience to date with this Government? Our experience has been one of constant reversals of positions, of broken promises and broken trusts. When those Hon. Members opposite were running for office they promised, "jobs, jobs, jobs". Now that they are in office, their priorities have been switched. Their priority now is cutting public spending. They are focusing all of their attention on economic policy, on the deficit, and they have forgotten about their commitment to provide employment for people.

When those Hon. Members were running for office, they said that universality and social programs, medicare, pensions and family allowances were a sacred trust. What have they done, Mr. Speaker? Shortly after those Hon. Members were elected to office they started to raise questions about universality, and they have raised so many questions about universality that the people across this country are very concerned about what the Government might do with pensions and family allowances. So there is no basis for trust in this Government when it comes to asking for broad, wide and sweeping authority without any limits or guidelines.

When those Hon. Members opposite were running for office, Mr. Speaker, they said they would reduce public spending by cutting out waste. Shortly after they were elected to office, November 8 to be specific, a series of cut-backs was started which affected the substance of various programs, including the area of the fisheries.

My time is running out, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to say that I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this debate because I believe it is important that when a Government asks for authority to act in any area, that that authority be limited and that the Government defines precisely what it wants to do before it brings legislation to this House.

It should not come here asking for a blanket authority and absolute trust.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this day.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

THE LATE KONSTANTIN CHERNENKO, PRESIDENT OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): On behalf of the Government of Canada and, I am sure, Hon. Members of this House, I rise to extend our condolences to the Government of the Soviet Union, the Soviet people, and the family of Mr. Chernenko, on the untimely death of the leader of the Soviet Union. Mr. Chernenko's death was not unexpected. He had been ailing for several months.