

*Commercial Fisheries Development*

they decided to discontinue the payment of subventions under the Cold Storage Act because of the fact that prior to 1957 a few friends in the Liberal party had made a gold mine out of continuing subventions under the Cold Storage Act and borrowings from the Industrial Development Bank. Consequently the Tories saw fit to limit the payment of subventions.

We protested at that time because the matter came under the Department of Agriculture. We said there should be a separate determination of all fisheries products cold storage warehouses and that they should be divorced from the department of Agriculture; and I commend the minister for taking heed of our words uttered at that time.

I am inclined to think that the bill should be expanded—I hope this is one of the amendments the minister has in mind when we reach the appropriate clause—so that payments or subventions, as they might otherwise be called, under clause 5 might also be made to fisheries products processing plants as well as to cold storages.

We recently had a situation on the Queen Charlotte Islands where the only fish cannery on the islands was on the verge of going under, owing to a series of events over the last number of years, most of them difficulties over which the company had no control but which emanated from the fishery itself. We saw a situation there where that plant was maintained in operation only by the workers themselves putting in a subsidy by way of taking a lower price for the fish they caught than would normally be the case on that coast. This would have been a prime case in point for payments under a bill of this sort.

If the minister will later on move an amendment to that clause to provide for payments to processing plants, he will be taking another step in the direction of properly and fully giving all the assistance available in order to develop and preserve the fishing industry in the province of British Columbia, as well as that in the provinces along the other coast. I merely mentioned British Columbia because that is the province from which I come and the one with which I am most familiar.

It is regrettable that my own provincial government has not only not seen fit to interest itself so far in participating with the federal government in the development of our fisheries, but it is also regrettable to note that the provincial government in office now, that of Social Credit, is the one that destroyed the

[Mr. Howard.]

department of fisheries we used to have in 1957 and, in effect, thumbed its nose at the problems of the fishing industry in that province. It is a sad event, when the great bulk of the income in our province comes from the fishing industry, to see a government in effect ignoring the entire industry and the difficulties with which it is faced.

However, Mr. Chairman, this should not be used—and we have said this before—by the federal government as an excuse not to step into the field and to do all it can to promote the fishing industry in that province. Merely because there is a reluctance or an inability or a lack of concern on the part of Premier Bennett and others in this regard, should not deter the federal government from exhibiting a larger degree of interest than has been the case up till now.

The minister mentioned that under this bill we may be able to assist the groundfish industry which has advanced into the market in the last year or so. The minister also mentioned that under this legislation we might be able to deal adequately with the problem which exists in relation to dogfish which, up until now, with one or two slight exceptions, has not been a commercially marketable fish, although the livers have been fished for and for which at one time there were subsidies paid.

Development of these new fisheries and other new fisheries which exist on the coast and which heretofore have not been exploited to any marked degree will depend upon the extent to which we can market these products. In this regard it is interesting to note that the royal commission on price spreads of food products, which was appointed and reported during the time the Conservative government was in office, made some recommendations with respect to the marketing of fish, recommendations which so far have been ignored both by the Conservatives and by the subsequent Liberal government. This is one matter which must be looked at.

● (9:00 p.m.)

In this connection I am aware that clause 3 of the bill deals with the development and distribution of fisheries products; but I can only say that there is not much point in going full scale into exploring, developing and exploiting new fisheries if you also do not go full scale into marketing and selling those particular fish products.

The bill seeks primarily to advance the exploitation of fisheries and to advance and