

Humane Animal Traps

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Anderson: I move, seconded by the hon. member for Restigouche (Mr. Harquail):

That the motion be amended by deleting therefrom all the words after the word "that" and substituting therefor the following:

Bill C-208, an act to amend the Criminal Code (humane traps), be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Shall the amendment carry?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Shall the motion, as amended, carry?

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I wish to state my opposition to Bill C-208 as it now stands. While I can appreciate the motives behind this bill, I feel that the House should consider the full implications of this legislation. As a northerner and one who has spent some time on the trapline, and who has frozen his butt a few times when out trying to make a living, I am particularly concerned with the effect this bill will have on the trappers and their traditional means of making a living in the north. If the bill is passed as it now reads it will place severe burdens on individuals who have enough problems meeting day-to-day working conditions as hunters and trappers.

The hon. member who introduced this bill may not realize that most trappers operate individually. They have no big corporation to provide operating capital and expense accounts. The trapper must finance his entire enterprise out of his own pocket. Hon. members may be interested to note that the trappers of Canada are one of the few genuine private enterprisers left in this country. There may be fewer of these individual enterprisers left if this bill becomes law.

For the information of hon. members I would point out that a dozen standard six size 1½ traps cost \$28.80 at the Hudson's Bay store in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The average trapper needs at least 200 or 300 traps. This means that the trapper will have to pay out over \$500 to \$600 to obtain a new line of trapping equipment. This would be about \$600 over and above all of his other operating expenses. I believe the average income of a trapper in the north is around \$1,500 or \$2,000 per year.

As it is now, the trapper has to invest a lot of his money to replace traps each year that are lost, that are worn out, that are broken, and in some cases maybe even traps that have been stolen. Now the hon. member from Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) wants to add a new financial burden for hard-working individuals.

I should point out to this House that the trapper, for all of his hard work in the field, only makes a small percentage of the sales price of the finished item. Any trapper in Canada can quickly tell this House how tiny is the trapper's share in the price of a fur coat, for example.

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The cost of traps is only a small part of the trapper's operating expenses. He must furnish his own transportation in order to operate. His transportation could consist of a dog team, which is costly to operate, or of a motor toboggan, and I do not need to tell hon. members how costly they are. I expect most hon. members already know. The trapper must buy a lot of camping equipment, which is most expensive, and lots of expensive winter clothing if he is to survive and operate in the extreme northern temperatures. And it gets very cold; temperatures go to well below zero. As well, food is expensive in all of northern Canada. For example in Yellowknife food costs at least 30 per cent more than in Edmonton which is only 1,000 miles away by gravel highway. The trapper must buy large quantities of food in order to work for long periods on his traplines and earn his living.

Trapping is a traditional way of life in northern Canada. As it is the trapper makes but a meagre living from his hard work. I have known many trappers, and can assure hon. members here that they are hard workers who enjoy their line of work. They are not interested in welfare but many could be forced on to welfare rolls if this bill were to pass, since their operating costs would rise.

I feel that in this proposed bill the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich has his priorities completely confused. The effect of the bill would be to punish trappers for pursuing their traditional way of living. The bill would class as criminals trappers who do not have money to invest immediately for a new line of traps.

The bill, if passed, would place an unfair burden on the RCMP, members which would be required to patrol trap lines across the north. It would place a great burden as well on game officers, conservation officers, and environmental inspectors. All of these people have better things to do than harass hard-working individuals pursuing a line of work which has long been traditional in the north.

I submit that the bill uses a negative approach to gain a positive response. Its logic is all wrong. Why not use a positive approach to gain a positive response?

If the hon. member wants trappers to purchase a new kind of trap the federal government should provide an incentive for the purchase of such traps and not punish those trying to make a living under difficult conditions.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): I never introduced the kind of bill the hon. member describes.

Mr. Firth: I would recommend an amendment to the Regional Development Incentives Act. The government could provide grants to all trappers using the new humane traps mentioned earlier, if the new traps become available. In so doing the government would be encouraging a line of work which has enjoyed a long tradition in this country, and would not be punishing people for wanting to work at something they have known all their lives. Trapping is the only means of making a living that some northern people know.