

Fisheries Act

Mr. Fraser: —as does my friend, the Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) and other friends of mine in the New Democratic Party from British Columbia. It must be clearly understood that as long as this Bill is delayed I do not have the legal authority to proceed with the allocation and disposition of fishing plans in the Gulf of Georgia. This authority is necessary and should be announced in the interests of the Gulf trollers and for the continuation of the sports fishing commercial enterprise which the Province of British Columbia is so dependent upon at this time.

I want it clearly understood, Mr. Speaker, that it is the New Democratic Party, with its motion to adjourn, that has clearly decided to do everything it can to scuttle this Bill, no matter how reckless or irresponsible the action might be. The Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River said he had questions to ask. He has spent hours with my officials up until recently going over all the details of the proposed spot closures which will be very difficult to implement if this Bill is not passed. The Act without these amendments is still very much at risk, because there will be a court of appeal hearing on June 28 on the substance of the decision of last summer. I ask Hon. Members and the public to recognize the difference between constructive debate and intelligent and legitimate inquiry. That has ceased and Members of the New Democratic Party have decided, no matter how careless their action may be or how it will affect the livelihood of people in my province and on the West Coast, that they want to obstruct the process.

We have to do what we can to implement the terms of the Canada-U.S. Pacific Salmon Treaty as well, which involves restrictions on catch, and we need the power in this Bill to implement that. It is clearly the New Democratic Party, and not just one member who, while conscientious in my view, is misguided and seems to lack some understanding of the purpose of all this, that is preventing us from proceeding. The New Democratic Party has decided, no matter how long it has had to discuss this Bill and no matter how many days in committee, no matter how many private meetings with officials and discussions with myself or somebody else, to wreck the process and try to keep this Bill from being passed under any circumstances whatsoever. It must be clearly understood what the NDP is doing.

I am a little surprised that the Hon. Member for Skeena is doing this. He has representatives from his riding dealing with me on a matter of very great importance to the native people on the Taku River. I am trying to co-operate with him. There is no co-operation from the New Democratic Party on a Bill of immense importance to the administration of the fisheries in Canada.

● (1210)

I also want to point out, because it is appropriate to do so, that Hon. Members of the Official Opposition in the Liberal Party have been very diligent throughout the entire process. They have made constructive suggestions and have helped to bring before us those problems of the provinces which have now been resolved. They argued strongly for the inclusion of a

section to ensure that there be no abrogation or denigration of native rights, and that was appropriate. They have played a full and effective part in this process. It is not Her Majesty's Official Opposition which desires to wreck this piece of legislation.

I urge all Hon. Members to assist the House in passing this piece of legislation so that the uncertainties, especially those on the West Coast, can be clarified as quickly as possible. As soon as the Bill is passed, it is the disposition of the House to co-operate, I will be able to do something very quickly to alleviate the uncertainties with respect to Gulf trollers and others.

This is not only a West Coast matter. We are not asking for powers that have not been assumed. It may have been incorrect to assume them, given the court decisions which have flowed from the challenge. Nonetheless, those powers of allocation and administration have been assumed. As Hon. Members from Atlantic Canada know, the fisheries of the Atlantic Provinces could not be managed if the amendments requested at this time were not granted.

In conclusion, I urge all Hon. Members to understand clearly what this matter is all about, and that it is the New Democratic Party, with a Leader stationed in central Canada who does not understand fisheries, which is attempting something that is reckless and irresponsible.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser), but that little puff piece he just put before the House requires some response.

This Bill was introduced on March 4. In the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry we talked for the first time in a quarter of a century about going to British Columbia and listening to sports fishermen, native fishermen, seine boat fleets, gill-netters and trollers to find out their views. We took thousands of pages of evidence from the different user groups in British Columbia. Other than commercial sports fishermen, we found no support whatsoever for Bill C-32 as it is drafted.

The Minister said it was only the New Democratic Party which was holding up the legislation. We in British Columbia have listened a long time to jiggery-pokery from the Tories about consulting and then drafting legislation to meet our needs. In fact this Bill was drafted by the Liberal Party. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans took it hook, line and sinker from his bureaucrats, either here in Ottawa or in Hull. He talked about central Canadian legislation. That is where this piece of legislation was drafted; that is from where it came.

Also the Minister said that the committee should go out and hear evidence on what the people really wanted. We have heard from fishermen in British Columbia. They do not like the Bill as it is drafted because it does not have a consultative or protective mechanism for existing user groups. We are talking about native people, the native food fishery and the commercial fishery. We are talking about existing gear types and a group in British Columbia and within other areas of Canada which is massively expanding, the sports fishermen. There are