

*Freshwater Fish Marketing Act*

stock of these arguments and ask what this Bill would really accomplish if it were to pass.

In previous debates, the Hon. Member for Egmont (Mr. Henderson) has said that the Bill would really gut the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. If we look at the text, it will repeal the definition "participating province" from the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act, repeal Part III of the Act, and repeal the schedule to the Act.

Part III of the Act which the Bill proposes to eliminate is, no doubt, the "gut" to which the Hon. Member referred. It concerns the regulation of interprovincial and export trade, the duties and powers of the corporation, including the orderly marketing of fish, increasing returns to fishermen, and promoting international markets for and increasing interprovincial trade in fish. It also concerns the agreements respecting participation, which include that aforementioned co-operation among Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and the Northwest Territories. This section of the Act refers to agreements between the Government of Canada and these provinces for matters such as the sharing by provinces with the Government of Canada of any losses by the corporation, and functions relating to interprovincial trade in fish.

Thus we have a corporation established by the collective will of the participating provinces and the Government of Canada.

The Bill before us will commit the Government to repeal unilaterally this area of participation and co-operation. If passed, it would also remove the area of jurisdiction of the corporation and basically render it inoperative in the sense of federal and provincial territorial agreements which were signed to establish the corporation itself.

• (1700)

It is important to note that the Bill has been drafted but the provinces and the Territories have not expressed their consent at this point to the Bill in its present state. Therefore, we have to ask in fact what is the provincial reaction to Bill C-211. I would like to refer to that briefly because in the last couple of months all four provinces have cautioned us to treat the Bill gently or not to touch it.

Saskatchewan, clearly indicated its opposition to the Bill in a letter written by the Minister of Parks, Recreation and Culture for Saskatchewan. In his letter he stated: "Saskatchewan is committed to a unified marketing effort through a strong freshwater fish marketing corporation". He went on to say: "I do not support Bill C-211 and feel that it would be inappropriate to consider such legislation without consultation between all participants".

In a similar vein, a letter from the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife of Alberta said:

I understand that the single-desk marketing control provided by the present act is essential to the overall continued, successful working of the corporation. Consequently, I am not supportive of the principles which the Bill puts forward.

The Provinces of Manitoba and Ontario have sent similar letters. The Government of the Northwest Territories has not in any way asked for an alteration of the mandate of the corporation. While speaking on this matter on November 2, the Hon. Member for Portneuf (Mr. Ferland) indicated that this Bill would not only get rid of the corporation against the evident wishes of the provincial Governments but, indeed, it would do so unilaterally and without prior consultation with those provinces.

I refer to these communications to show that this is not a partisan matter but a matter guided by facts, logic and common sense. I would also like to observe that this is an era which has seen milestone events in the progress of federal-provincial relations. Can we not take advantage of the expertise and the active involvement of the provinces in making the fisheries respond to the challenges now put before them?

These challenges are very real. They include new technology, over-participation and over-capitalization at the processing level. They include insufficient development of local markets and product substitution. Can we possibly expect our fishermen, who are spread over an area of five million square kilometres and who market 23 species of fish to different and varied markets, to face and successfully master these challenges by themselves?

Provincial officials and members of all three Parties in this House are not the only ones who think that the FPMC and its concept of a single-desk marketing system is working. The Senate's Standing Committee on Fisheries in its 1986 report on the marketing of fish in Canada concluded, after extensive investigation, that there was more to be gained by improving single-desk selling than by getting rid of it. The committee's report gives a glimpse of the opportunities and pitfalls which face the fishery. It recommends that the provincial and territorial Governments, in co-operation with the FPMC, co-ordinate their efforts to bring about a good balance of investments in harvesting facilities, and the number of participants in the western fisheries given the harvestable quantities of fish.

I would have to join my provincial counterparts, my colleagues of all Parties, the Senate committee and the vast majority of our fishermen in saying I believe that Canadian freshwater fishermen should not be deprived of this organization if they feel it has been effective for them.

I am not suggesting that the FPMC has no room to improve. In fact, I believe my colleague who has promoted the Bill has expressed very well that there must be changes to affect the livelihood and well-being of fishermen from the Northwest Territories. However, to cut the FPMC unilaterally and without further consultation with the provinces will destroy the co-operative climate we have forged among the provinces, the fishermen and the federal Government.

We know that the provinces and the vast majority of the fishermen continue to support the FPMC. Fishermen have just