

### Government Orders

provinces share the same waters. When our TAC percentage is set before we sit down at the table, all that is left for us to do is to manage the resource properly. Provincial officials then go home and issue the licences needed to meet their quota, because each province has its own fleet. The provinces finance the fleets as well as the processing plants. This connection is very important.

Why am I speaking about this today in relation to Bill C-30 which provides for early retirement at 50 years of age? I always believed that wisdom would come with age. It galls me to have to support this measure but I want history to remember this so that these fishery workers will not have to pay twice for the administrative mistakes of the federal government.

Other points could also be mentioned. My colleagues raised a number of them at second reading. I would, however, like to emphasize one thing again at this time, namely that administrative rules should not prevent those taking early retirement from benefiting from economic initiatives. In time, some of the early retirees may decide they want to embark on a second career and they should not be prevented from doing so. Once they are back up to speed, they will be filing tax returns and the state will come out even on the deal, as they say. At this point in time, however, it is important that this bill be passed so as to ensure that these individuals, whether they live in Quebec, New Brunswick or Newfoundland, have food to put on the table.

Another concern of mine was—I asked questions to certain senior officials last week and put the question to the minister; perhaps we can get an official answer—will fishermen also be eligible under the same act? I have here a document which says that in the spirit of the existing legislation and the spirit of the fisheries recovery legislation—I do not remember the exact phraseology—fishermen would indeed become eligible for this pre-retirement plan when they turn 50. But I have not received a clear and firm answer on that. Yet, as one of our colleagues from the Reform Party pointed out at second reading, the Auditor General of Canada stated in his report that the government has to put a specific motion to the House before it can introduce such bills or authorize such public expenditures.

I have, on the one hand, the advice of the auditor general and, on the other hand, that of senior officials. First, I would like to comment on the bill as it now reads and second, I would like the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to administer its own pre-retirement program for fishermen.

• (1305)

I wanted to look at the next problem from this perspective. Much remains to be done. As far as the industry rationalization boards are concerned, some steps were taken but they have not been set up yet and we do not know what their membership will

be. Why bring this up? Because establishing pre-retirement programs for fishermen will require extensive discussions with the provinces. As I said earlier, fishing boats were subsidized by the provinces.

How can we reconcile on the one hand, Ottawa giving fishermen a pre-retirement allowance and on the other hand, the province refusing to forgive the debt on boats? That would not make any sense. Again, how much of the \$1.9 billion the minister has made available will be spent on pre-retirement programs? I do not want to see one single dollar of this money go to waste. I hope that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will come to an agreement with his provincial counterparts on this subject.

Failing which I would suggest that the resource envelope allocated to this measure be handed over to the province so that it can make appropriate arrangements. These are the general points I wanted to raise. Much was said about the high costs associated with this pre-retirement program and with the loss of expertise, but we did not hear much at all from the government, about ideas for the fisheries of the future.

Let us hear about it. This represents a \$1.9 billion investment. I want to be sure we do not end up no further ahead after spending this kind of money. When he presented his program, the minister gave us the impression that we would have a better idea of the situation after six weeks of consultations. I do not have the date handy, but these six weeks must be almost up. We are coming to the end of the parliamentary session. Should I conclude that there will not be any new developments on these issues before the fall?

I think it would have been a good sign for the minister to issue guidelines before the end of the parliamentary session, in order to guide industry and continue discussions during the summer. If we wait until the fall, we should decide quickly what to do with fishermen. The minister's program deals with community and environmental projects—the expression “green projects” is used—but I want to remind you that it is difficult to work on the environment in late October. We should make plans right away to ensure that something will be put forward this summer.

Future involves other things as well. What industrial structure do we want to set up? Quebec and Canada were discovered because of our resources, namely fish or cod to be more precise. We exploited this resource in a traditional fashion. The first effective way to preserve fish was to salt and dry it. We still do it, but it has become a special product. There are other species of fish. When freezers arrived on the scene, as I mentioned, we produced frozen cod blocks, but there are still other species we have not exploited.

The current market trend is fresh fish. It is therefore necessary to handle smaller volumes of fish but consumers are willing to pay a little more in return.