

But, Mr. Speaker, the national budget has been so much neglected for the past ten years or so that catching up with this negligence will be very costly and the government will have to maintain the national budget at a very high level.

The subcommittee of the committee on national resources and public works recommended last year that capital investments should be of the order of \$30 million a year. In view of the fact that many facilities have been neglected in the past, even a \$30 million budget is not too high and, of course, account taken of inflation, the government should keep this national budget at a much higher level than \$30 million because funds spent in improving our port facilities are far from being wasted money.

If we consider the other economic contributions of those facilities, with the exception of commercial fisheries, I think that they provide many advantages.

I refer here to those facilities used not only for fishing but also for recreation. It is quite important to have coastal a harbour installations which can accommodate and assist Canadian boats.

I merely wish to say in conclusion that the improvement of harbour installations deeply concerns fishermen, local authorities, unions, fishermen's associations, industrialists and civic leaders, because they want, as I said a while ago, to make good and have harbour installations governed by adequate standards.

Mr. Speaker, even if it does not directly affect the bill, I would like to discuss the question of unemployment insurance for fishermen.

I think that many people still say that it is a social subsidy. It is no more a social subsidy for fishermen than it is for construction workers.

In many regions of this country, the construction industry is paralysed in the wintertime and consequently workers live on unemployment insurance.

What is unemployment insurance in these instances? It is a subsidy to the construction industry. To grant a social subsidy in the fishing sector is not worse than in the other sectors.

To my mind, there is some injustice in the way fishermen are treated under the unemployment insurance program. I have not the time today during this debate on a bill which concerns mainly subsidies for the modifications of boats, to discuss this problem in depth. However, I will simply say that after several meetings with groups of fishermen in my constituency, I realize that there are some obvious injustices and I hope the government will correct them as soon as possible.

It seems to me two things should be done. First of all, something similar to crop insurance should be set up, a type of catch insurance that would compensate fishermen for their losses in times of disasters and bad storms. This would help stabilize the fishermen's income.

But catch insurance, Mr. Speaker, would not suffice to give the fishermen social benefits comparable to those the unemployed get. There is no reason why fishermen should not get the same benefits as other workers. And what is worse, in several cases, the fishermen is subjected to special regulations under which he gets less benefit, less

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unemployment insurance when his son or daughter or even his wife worked in a fish factory, and after eight, ten or 12 weeks of contributions, depending on the area of the country, and this happens in my riding, they are granted benefits for about 40 weeks.

When this special program was established in 1972, at the same time as the new unemployment insurance program, I think it was expected that a catch insurance program might be implemented to replace unemployment insurance for fishermen.

It is obviously impossible to do so, because the government contribution to the unemployment insurance fund is too high.

In order to be put on the same footing as other workers, the fishermen would have to pay much higher contributions, way too much as compared with that of other workers.

I merely want to say this at this point, Mr. Speaker, because it is an area that deeply concerns the fishermen of my riding.

By way of a conclusion, I shall say that the bill the hon. minister has brought forward today is a good one, not only because it aims at helping fishermen in difficult circumstances due to a poor market, the scarcity or overexploitation of a number of fish species, but also because it is an incentive. In fact, this positive legislation will encourage fishermen to consider and analyse in minute details the true benefits of fishing such and such species, and maybe convert their equipment and fishing vessels accordingly.

● (1410)

[English]

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to take part in the debate and to support some of the propositions put forward before the luncheon break by the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse). I am happy to see this amendment to the Fisheries Development Act. Many fishermen in my constituency have been anxiously waiting for passage of this legislation because they want to avail themselves of some of the funds which will be available under this act. I have certain reservations as to how accessible this fund will be to fishermen.

I have figures before me showing the disposition of funds made available under the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act since its inception in 1955. As an Atlantic Canadian, I am not overly impressed with the amount of money which has been lent in my part of the country under the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act. I am not at all against British Columbia getting all the funds it can under that act. I see, according to the statistics which have been given to me, that Pacific coast fishermen received two-thirds of all money lent under the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act since its inception in 1955, and that little more than one-quarter of total funds went to Atlantic Canada.

One must bear in mind, too, that in 1971 Atlantic coast fishermen landed 2.1 billion pounds of fish and shellfish, whereas in the same period fishermen on the Pacific coast landed 229 million pounds of fish. This indicates to me clearly that there is greater need for assisting fishermen