

Fisheries Improvement Loans Act

necessary to make replacements. Faced with this fact, what can our fishermen do? They have to continue to work in the fishing industry since in many cases they have no alternative. However, with inflated costs and no assistance to them in the form of ship-building subsidies, I submit that a loan of \$25,000 is inadequate today when one considers the over-all cost of ship and gear replacement.

These are not my views alone; they were endorsed by fishermen from various fisheries organizations that appeared before the fisheries and forestry committee at the hearings held by the committee throughout the minister's own province of British Columbia. In fact, as the minister himself stated when speaking to the bill on second reading, the raising of the ceiling was due to submissions directed to his department by the provincial ministers of fisheries to the effect that the optimum size of fishing boats and gear involves costs well in excess of \$10,000 and sometimes in excess of \$25,000.

In view of this fact I quite frankly cannot understand why the minister did not raise the ceiling at this time to \$50,000. If he had done so he would really have been only endorsing his own point of view which he expressed quite forcefully when he spoke on second reading of the bill. After all, money will be lent only to fishermen who are vitally interested in expanding their operations; it will not be lent to those who are lazy, to laggards who are not desirous of going forward. This money will be lent only to those who are energetic and want to make a greater contribution to the over-all economy of Canada.

The government itself only guarantees the loans, with the discretion for making loans still retained by the lending institutions. A search of the repayment record of all loans made to date under this legislation indicates that the government would not be assuming any great additional responsibility if the ceiling on loans were raised to \$50,000. In the over-all interests of our fishermen, our ship-builders and the economy of Canada, I hope the minister will give further consideration to raising the ceiling on loans when he introduces legislation in the next session dealing with fisheries problems.

For the same reason I hope the minister will consider extending the repayment period. After all, we now consider 40 years a suitable repayment period for loans made under the National Housing Act. If we extended the

[Mr. Crouse.]

repayment period for loans to fishermen from 10 years to 15 years we would enable the fishermen better to plan their finances. They are subject to every hazard possible while carrying out their operations—to fire, storm and man-made pollution. Their record has shown that they will not abuse any privilege granted to them. They are as desirous and anxious as any group in Canada to meet their commitments and to make their payments when they fall due. Bearing in mind their record in this regard, I think it would be fair and just if we made it possible for fishermen to plan better their entire fishing operations. We can do this by extending the repayment period from 10 years to 15 years. We would then make it possible for our fishermen to fish more efficiently, to meet better their financial obligations and to plan better their over-all contribution to the development of this country's fisheries.

● (11:10 a.m.)

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, most of the points I wished to touch on have been covered by my colleagues in the N.D.P. and the Conservative party. Nevertheless, may I briefly emphasize a couple of points that I consider important. As Your Honour may know, the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) originally submitted an amendment which, if it had been accepted, would have permitted fishermen to refinance existing debts they had incurred for their vessels. The hon. member was most sincere in his desire to be helpful.

All hon. members who know anything about the fisheries on the west coast know that west coast fishing companies control many privately-owned fishing vessels. The reason for this is that the owners of the vessels are indentured, so to speak, to the fishing companies. Our fishermen are in debt. It is not correct to say that the fishing companies have been motivated entirely by altruistic motives in advancing money to fishermen. The fishermen have used the loans to buy fishing vessels and have been obliged by the terms of their contracts to supply the fishing companies with catches of fish. Many west coast fishermen are anxious to escape from the clutches of the companies but are unable to do so as they are tied too tightly to the companies through financing arrangements. As I said, the companies have been willing to advance these loans with strings attached because they want the fishermen to supply company canneries with fish. In fairness I must say that when other sources would not