

Freshwater Fish Marketing Act

fish. One Crown corporation was on the East Coast of Canada and the other was in western Canada. One had to do with saltfish and the other had to do with fresh fish. The difficulty that the Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans have had with the repeated suggestion of the Hon. Member for the Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson), is that each Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has always looked at it with the idea that the corporation was for the general good of the area concerned. It is the same argument which is used in eastern Canada and in western Canada as it relates to this particular corporation.

I have wondered, Mr. Speaker, over the years if perhaps the Hon. Member for Western Arctic did not represent the one area covered by the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation which perhaps had a very accessible and probably very marketable product and there was, perhaps, a great demand for that product in Canada and the United States. Perhaps the marketing corporation was using that profitable section of its control to balance out the least profitable areas of its jurisdiction. I rather suspect that that is the truth of the matter and that the hon. gentleman can see no other solution to this problem but to do away with the monopoly of this particular Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, there is a down side to this argument. When you do away with the corporation in effect, with that type of a monopoly, then of course the more profitable elements of its jurisdiction will themselves do their own marketing and thereby raise the costs and economic viability of the remainder of that jurisdiction, probably to the point where the Government would not be able to finance that particular corporation. However, the hon. gentleman has a point. I think that the Party he represents listened to him very carefully over the years. In fact, it listened to him to the point of putting in the Party platform that it would end the monopoly of the Canadian Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. That was in party policy. Of course, Mr. Speaker, you have to understand that when you end that monopoly, in effect you end the corporation, unless the Government is prepared then to turn around and provide greater per unit subsidization of that operation than it did in the past.

It is unfortunate that the hon. gentleman's Bill is before us at this point in time for the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) because of all the times in Canadian history over the past 10 or 12 years, as far as fisheries is concerned, this is perhaps the most difficult time for a federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He has had the courts in western Canada and British Columbia come up with decisions which really said that the federal Fisheries Act had no teeth and that it could not allocate licences by gear types. Recently the court in New Brunswick passed down a judgment which said the Government cannot control where people go to fish. As long as they have a licence, they are allowed under the mobility provisions of the Constitution to go wherever they want to go and fish. The Minister was also confronted with all of these problems which were created because of budgetary cuts. Then he was presented with the problem of overfishing.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that if you polled the Members of the House of Commons who have been here for several years, they would have to say that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) probably made the best choice possible for the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I think it generally agreed, Mr. Speaker, that he made the best choice possible with what he had to choose from. The gentleman knows his business. He knows the fishery inside out and he knows the environment inside out as well, but he is being presented with all these problems.

● (1620)

We have a Bill before the House for second reading and we have the federal Minister trying to figure how he can weasel out of a campaign promise, a Party position, to end this monopoly. Add to that the fact that the Hon. Member for Western Arctic is still sitting in the House. That presents an additional problem for the Minister. The Minister knew that the first thing the Hon. Member would do when he came back in the Chamber was put a Bill on the Order Paper asking for the demise of the Canadian Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

I think that his concluding remarks, where he said this matter could be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry, could be a way out. I certainly would support that proposition if it were proposed by the Parliamentary Secretary. I suppose we have to challenge him to do that. We have to ask him what is wrong with referring it to the committee. Is he afraid to have it discussed? I am sure the Hon. Member for the Western Arctic would agree that it should be discussed openly and examined by Members of the House of Commons, especially since the Conservatives put it in their Party platform. The speaker for the NDP should make sure that he does not go on too long so the Parliamentary Secretary can stand in his place, own up to a promise made by a Conservative Government, try to half satisfy the Hon. Member for Western Arctic and do what he should do by referring this entire subject matter to the standing committee.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I am not used to getting up in the House today. It is unfortunate that we are not allowed to mention the presence or absence of a Member, but I cannot ask a question of the Liberal Member who asked me about what I had been doing in the House because he is not here. Neither will I take advantage of this time to continue the debate on the uselessness of the Senate, so I will speak about the matter before us.

It will be no surprise to you, Mr. Speaker, that there have been discussions among the three Parties and that there is a willingness to accept that the subject matter of the Bill before us should go to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry for further study. I find that acceptable. I have entered into debate with the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) as to his intentions, which is basically to dissolve the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation or make sure that it competes with private buyers. I disagreed for many years with that supposition of the Hon. Member. Having said