

Humane Animal Traps

know. I think this bill and this reference to a committee will offer us an opportunity to find out.

I should therefore like the bill or its intent to be referred to a committee where we can summon spokesmen of this federal-provincial group and secure from them an accounting of their activities. We should also be able to have interested organizations appear before the committee and give evidence and advice.

It seems to me that this federal-provincial committee ought to be providing, in addition to its other services, incentive grants for invention, as well as testing devices already on the drawing boards. One of the traps tested by the committee was invented, I am told, without financial support from the committee by an elderly experienced trapper who, for lack of funds, was obliged to scavenge the material for his working model from junk yards and secondhand shops. This enterprise ought to have been assisted and encouraged. The inventor ought at least to have been recompensed for his input.

Another way of getting things done and of getting proper devices developed would be for the committee to offer inducements to private and public research communities to inquire more closely into this important activity. There are people who rely on it for their livelihood. We are not denying that, and we are not trying to deny them their livelihood.

The two suggestions, together with extended funding from the same sources, are the only ones which can possibly produce results which all desire. In order to get this process under way I most earnestly request this House to let us proceed, before six o'clock, to a vote on this measure and to get it into a committee where the desired action and publicity can be obtained.

In conclusion, if this does not meet with the approval of hon. members on the government side, I would like to make a suggestion. If the government is not prepared to let the bill go to a committee, perhaps some hon. member opposite could be induced to move a relevant motion to have at least its subject matter referred to a committee, and I hope an hon. member opposite will so move. In that event I hope no objection will be raised on any side of the House to this procedural device, it being understood, of course, that once the motion is moved, discussion can continue. It would not cut off discussion, provided also, of course, that we end discussion just before six o'clock.

● (1710)

Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to commend the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro), whose constituency is not too far down the road from Comox-Alberni, for raising the subject he has briefly discussed.

I think all of us in this House would agree that the present inhumane way of trapping in Canada is something of which we are not very proud. It would be fair to say that for several hundred years we have used a method of trapping which is inhumane and barbaric and which we would not allow in killing domestic animals for consumption. I think the hon.

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

member should be commended for drawing the attention of the House to this matter and to the fact that for the last two years a federal-provincial committee has been studying the subject. The present effort to develop traps which would be more humane than the traditional leg-hold trap is an example of the useful role the federal government plays in an area which is basically under provincial legislation.

The Canadian Wildlife Service of the Department of Fisheries and the Environment, following provincial requests in 1973, assisted in establishing a federal-provincial committee for humane trapping and has provided considerable expertise and financing for this very worthy project. Traps selected by the committee as worthy of serious study are presently being tested by the Canadian Wildlife Service. From the results of the early phases of this testing program the Canadian Wildlife Service will develop scientific criteria for the committee by which the committee can evaluate other traps.

After the first phase of laboratory work and field testing the Wildlife Service will help the committee to develop scientifically valid standards for humane traps. These standards can then be used by provincial governments in their regulation of trapping. I emphasize that the provinces will be charged with the ultimate responsibility of bringing the regulations into force regarding humane trapping.

The federal-provincial committee for humane trapping has a five-year program due to be finalized in 1979. The committee has a difficult task because the technology of steel traps has been extensively developed over a period of 100 or 200 years without producing any satisfactory alternative to the use of the leg-hold traps. I think it is unrealistic to expect a replacement of this within one or two years. The need to replace the leg-hold trap is clearly indicated, but to expect the necessary technology to be developed in a short space of time is unrealistic.

The Department of Fisheries and the Environment fully supports the work of the federal-provincial committee for humane trapping. When this program is complete, national standards for humane trapping will be available to all Canadian jurisdictions vis-à-vis the question of regulating trapping. I think that would be the time to consider legislative means of enforcing the use of humane traps in Canada. In my opinion, such legislation, prior to the completion of the committee's work, would be to act without the required knowledge.

Having some doubt about whether the hon. member's bill is constitutional and whether the federal government has any jurisdiction over the use of leg-hold traps, I would like to propose an amendment that the subject matter be referred not to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs but to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry, and I realize this can only be done by unanimous consent. I was pleased when the hon. member remarked that this was satisfactory to him and that it would not end debate which would continue until the appointed hour. Mr. Speaker, I would therefore ask for the unanimous consent of the House to put the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Is it agreed?