

*Government Orders*

policy that is going to ensure the kind of renewable resource policy that we need in this country.

This bill, C-74, is a bill to amend the Fisheries Act which, interestingly, was likely one of the first pieces of legislation passed by Parliament after Confederation. The Fisheries Act, first passed in 1868, has given, generally, the legal authority to the Government of Canada to conserve and protect fish habitats and to control and manage Canada's fisheries. It has been amended 40 times since 1868, which gives an indication of the amount of time and importance that Parliament gives to our fisheries. It is interesting, as a side note, that a lot of the words we use about the fisheries resource are the same ones that we use in forestry in terms of developing a resource and the problems that we have there.

Let us take a look at some of the issues in this legislation and some of the concerns that we in this party have over the bill. Before I start, I should give some credit to the member for Nanaimo who was our fisheries critic and did a great deal of the important background work on this proposed legislation prior to my taking over the responsibility. I thank him for that because he is certainly well known in that field and has a great deal of knowledge. His will be some big shoes to fill and we will see how it goes.

This proposed legislation, Bill C-74, is primarily oriented toward increasing the fines levied against those who either fish illegally or contaminate or destroy fish habitats. This is essentially the purpose behind the proposed legislation.

• (1630)

There are also provisions which strengthen the ability of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to gather the information necessary for the department to monitor fishing activity. It is one of the areas mentioned by the previous speaker. Clearly, when this legislation is before the committee, it is what we are going to have to take a look at in terms of the detail of that legislation and how it will impact on the small inshore operators.

In this context we are not opposed to this legislation. However, there are some very serious proposals which I will lay out in a number of points about this legislation

that we will have to deal with in committee and in later debate.

First is the importance and need for public participation and debate in this legislation. I know the parliamentary secretary is listening carefully. I know he will enjoy, and I hope support, our proposal to have the committee travel when it deals with this legislation to have an opportunity to hear from people about this specific legislation and some of the proposals and changes that we will be proposing and making. Of course there will be changes that may come from the other parties as well. It is our intention to introduce those amendments and any others that are required either in committee or in the report stage of the legislation.

Let us take a look at the legislation. Basically it relates in a number of ways to what this government is trying to do in terms of *The Green Plan* which has not done well to date. I suppose at some point we will hear more from the Minister of the Environment as he tries to recover and gain some high ground with that plan. To date it has been considered by all to be a failure.

Two very important reports on the east coast fishery that have been debated and discussed in the fisheries committee and raised many times in the House are the Harris report on northern cod and the Haché report on the Scotia-Fundy groundfishery.

Perhaps I can add a certain west coast perspective to this bill at this point. There is a complete lack of any substantive background material on what this bill can do to try and crack down on polluters on the west coast. This is an indication of the government's failure to address the whole question of pollution from pulp mills and to try to clean up the Fraser River. There has been no serious attempt by this government. It is one of the shortcomings in the background material. We will be mentioning and referring to that later as we go.

The intent of the legislation is certainly laudable and one that I have said that we can support for that purpose. I put a question earlier today to a previous speaker. You can write all of these fine things into legislation or you can even put them into constitutions, but how can we be assured that those policies, laws, and rules are actually going to be followed up on and be acted upon?