

Fisheries Development Act

people engaged in fishing or working in fish packing plants, fisheries are certainly the most socially important industry in my electoral district.

Thus, in 1969, 17 per cent of fish catches in Canada were produced in my riding. A percentage of 17 is a lot, Mr. Speaker, even for a Nova Scotia member. I am proud of this achievement, and that explains why fishing is not only a part of our economy, but a part of our culture. In fact, for several coastal settlements, the end of fishing would mean a great cultural, social, and economic loss.

The amendments introduced by the minister today will be very profitable, Mr. Speaker, since, for many years, the fishing industry has been overdeveloped. When one type of fishing becomes overdeveloped, the fisherman must abandon his boat because all his equipment is aimed at this particular industry. He finds himself at a disadvantage since the only way he can benefit from the subsidy is to abandon his old boat or sell it or have another one built. I think this bill will rectify this situation.

Not only will the bill help fishermen in such a situation, but it will also make positive improvements. We must urge the fishermen to go into types of fishing that will be more profitable. If today, for instance, a fisherman is herring-fishing in the Gulf of St. Lawrence or the Chaleurs Bay, because I am a native of this area, one that you know very well Mr. Speaker, or if he is herring-fishing offshore or even inshore, I think that he should be encouraged to convert his fishing to another species. This bill will enable the fisherman to qualify for subsidies to pay for his expenses when transforming his boat.

Not only is this a remedy or an improvement for the fisherman, since fishing is overdeveloped and no longer profitable, but it is also an encouragement, a stimulus for the fisherman. He will be able to determine whether his type of fishing is really the most profitable or whether he should not go into another type.

Mr. Speaker, the supply aspect of fishing is not the only one to determine if a fisherman should continue to fish one particular species; there is also the market situation to consider. Today, prices are good for Atlantic crab. For certain species there might be less fish so prices are in a state of depression. Fishermen could perhaps be encouraged to go into those resources whose market is more responsive and consequently more profitable.

I mentioned potential conversion or encouraging fishermen to convert when the market is perhaps not so good or when the resource is not there. Mr. Speaker, there are still in the sea species which are not sufficiently fished. For example, there is the small crab known as the rock crab and means have not yet really been found to handle it for market purposes. Incidentally, a company in my riding has filed an application with DREE to build a plant which will buy the small rock crab. Its name is not yet common currency but people familiar with fishing will know what I am talking about. They will be able to handle and market it. And fishermen will have to know in advance that that fish is marketable. They will have to buy equipment and in certain cases convert their vessels.

That fishing operation is usually done with multipurpose vessels, small vessels used to fish lobster or herring near the coasts, or even the larger crab, the Atlantic crab.

[Mr. Breau.]

Some minor or major alterations might have to be done to the vessels. Mr. Speaker, may I call it one o'clock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

Mr. Breau: Mr. Speaker, when the House adjourned at one o'clock, I was in the process of explaining that Bill C-2 is not only a piece of legislation to help people being disadvantaged owing to the fact that the species of fish they are seeking to capture does not exist anymore or is threatened with extinction or that the market is not good. This bill incorporates many good features.

The positive aspect of this measure is as follows: The government, being responsible for that, will from now on encourage fishermen to look for the more profitable species of fish. Governments have the responsibility to make sure that Canadians get the maximum profit especially in the fishing area.

A way of ensuring that we are getting maximum earnings is to see that fishermen fish for a profitable resource, either, because the market is good or because the resource is sufficient.

Mr. Speaker, even if that has nothing to do directly with this bill, I should like to mention a few needs of the fishing industry in my area. Obviously, one must distinguish between deep-sea fishing and inshore fishing, as deep-sea fishing is much more a trade, an important business, economy-wise, than inshore fishing.

As I said before one o'clock, inshore fishing not only has an economical value but it also has undoubtedly a social and even a cultural value because people at home and everywhere in the Maritime provinces are proud of having settled along the shores on a community basis.

I should like to say, Mr. Speaker, that, contrary to what many people think, the fishing boat building subsidy program is not necessarily a subsidy program for the fishing industry. I find it most important to explain that fact. For example, in the case of smaller boats, that may be subsidizing the fishing industry but in the case of larger boats, traditionally, grants have been paid not necessarily because the fishing industry needed them but to maintain the Canadian shipyards.

The fishermen, and mainly those needing bigger boats, were and probably still are able to buy their boats abroad at a significantly lower cost than in Canada. The purpose of the program was first to subsidize the shipbuilding industry rather than the fishing industry.

I would like to mention a few needs of the fishing industry. Of course the most urgent one is the improvement of port facilities. We are all happy about the fact that the Department of Fisheries is now responsible for planning the construction of port facilities related to fishing.