

Fisheries Act

I do want the Hon. Member and the House to understand that in discussions with my hon. friend, in perfectly appropriate discussions before the Bill was debated and afterwards, my friend made the suggestion to me that I write down fixed guidelines within which any Minister would operate under the powers the Bill would have with these amendments. I even considered doing that until I heard my hon. friend talking about absolute guarantees of traditional percentages. The moment my friend says that, it puts any Minister of Fisheries in an almost hopeless position because traditional percentages have been adjusting and changing on the West Coast. They have been adjusting and changing by agreement among the different user groups. There will have to be some adjustments in that. I say to you with all frankness, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot come in front of the House and write down a guideline that makes promises that I think will be almost impossible to fulfil in their exactitude.

If my hon. friend wants me to come before the committee and be questioned—it is an unusual procedure, ordinarily this would happen only when this Bill goes to committee—but if my hon. friend is asking me to speed up the process by adjourning this debate and going before the committee to be questioned, I am only too ready to do that.

I want to say through you, Mr. Speaker, that I know the Hon. Member well. We have a high regard for each other, I believe. It was necessary for me, perhaps, to be a little bit acerbic this morning, but my hon. friend has, in the best traditions of the House of Commons, come back with a soft answer and now perhaps he can consider the comments I have made. I will be very interested to hear what his Party and, of course, what my friends in the Official Opposition have to say to that.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, I think progress has been made. I would like to make a brief comment on the guideline situation. We were not looking for fixed guidelines, in the sense that they would bind the Minister forever, or to have a totally fixed framework. What we were looking for is the acknowledgement that traditional user groups in the industry would continue to exist and that their rough percentages of involvement would be maintained until by agreement with the user group committee, that could be changed. Therefore, no one would be forced out and they could anticipate, in the short term at least, an acceptable level of presence based on the historical frame.

I do not hear a lot of difference in what the Minister is saying. The other suggestion is that maybe this debate could be adjourned for a period of time, leaving the Government to move on to the Bretton Woods Agreements Bill or whatever its second order of business is, so we could move this Bill to committee and take a quick look at what the Minister has in mind, might be a very useful process.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly) referred a couple of times in his remarks to my being in the House and he wanted to know why I had not objected to the policies concerning fishing of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser). I would like to remind the Hon. Member that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is the most available Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

I have ever seen in my experience in this House. I have spoken to him so often during the past six months about fisheries matters on the West Coast that he used to pick up the phone and say "Hello, Allan" every day. He has been co-operative to a very reasonable degree.

The Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River comes from a commercial fishing area and knows little about sports fishing, I suppose, although he should know because Campbell River is in that region as well as a lot of our commercial fishing fleet.

Around my area, the Victoria constituency, there is mainly sports fishing. We came to what seems to me to be a reasonable compromise between the first cast at the rules for sports fishing this year, which were pretty unacceptable to sports fishermen in my region and the compromise with which the Minister eventually came up that we will be allowed to catch two Spring salmon or Chinook fish each day and 20 per year. I had hoped that during this debate someone would state or be able to question the Minister as to whether that rule would supersede the rule about the 285,000 pieces that can be caught by the trollermen plus the sports fishermen in a year. When that 285,000 has been achieved, does it mean that the person who then has bought a sports fishing licence for \$10 can still go out and catch two per day and 20 for the balance of the year?

The purpose of this Bill, which the NDP has been filibustering for several days now and which it now wants to hoist for six months, has been simply to bring some order out of the chaos in the fishing regulations at the present time. The NDP, as is its wont, objects to order. Members of the NDP prefer chaos. They do much better if they can find a chaotic situation about which to complain and grieve and so try to engender some support.

If you look at the clauses in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, each item here is simply to correct a very woolly part of the existing Fisheries Act. I certainly think that the Bill—it is not the end of the legislation—cannot provide a thriving and totally orderly fishing industry, but it goes a long way toward that laudable aim.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The period for questions and comments is now over. We shall now resume debate. The Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker).

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I understand the official critics in the Opposition are now meeting with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) with the hope of arriving at some mutual agreement on the progress of this Bill. In the meantime, perhaps I could address some of the questions that have been raised. The hon. gentleman who spoke a few moments ago put to the House the problems of the sports fishermen that perhaps by the time the fishermen had obtained their licences, all the pieces of salmon would be gone. That is precisely the problem, Mr. Speaker. It also applies to the commercial fishermen who are saying that when the time of the year has arrived for them to go fishing,