

● (1550)

The minister knows full well that the corporation is not without enemies and that those enemies are not without influence. All they need is an excuse to turn their guns on this very useful and worth-while corporation. That would be regrettable. I believe that if the minister sanctions this marketing arrangement with the small processors he will not, albeit inadvertently, be acting in the best interests of the corporation. I believe the small processors have a right to marketing but they have a problem in that they have to compete with the large processors. There is nothing to stop them from coming together and forming a co-operative marketing company, however.

If the minister wants to bring in a bill to set up a company to market fresh frozen fish, then we will deal with it on its own terms. Or if the minister wants to bring in an amendment to the Saltfish Act to make provision for the marketing of fresh frozen fish, we will deal with that on its own terms as well. I hope, however, that the minister does not use the act establishing the corporation for these purposes.

I should like to quote in support of my argument from the statute establishing the Canadian Saltfish Corporation, Mr. Speaker. Under the heading "Purpose and Powers", section 7 of the act reads as follows:

The corporation is established for the purpose of improving the earnings of primary producers of cured saltfish by curing fish and trading in and marketing cured fish and the byproducts of fish curing and, in addition to the powers conferred by other provisions of this act and by any other act, has for that purpose power to

- (a) buy fish and dress, salt, dry or package it, or otherwise prepare cured fish and the byproducts of fish curing for market;
- (b) buy cured fish and the byproducts of fish curing and package or otherwise prepare such fish and byproducts for market;

There is no reference there or anywhere in the act to giving the corporation authority to buy fish in its fresh frozen state and to sell it in that form. According to the act it can specifically only buy and sell cured fish and, generally speaking, that means cured codfish. It can sell other species as long as it is cured—for example, pickled herring or salted salmon, which it now sells from the Labrador fishery. Nowhere in the act, however, is there authority for the corporation to sell fresh frozen fish. If the corporation does that, as it has in the past, and if it agrees to act as marketing agent for small processors of fresh frozen fish, then it is acting beyond the terms of its mandate and certainly leaves itself open to litigation.

I want to repeat, Mr. Speaker, that my concern stems from the fact that I believe in the corporation. I believe it has an excellent future and that it is under good management now, as it has been in the past. As the minister knows, it has a good board of directors. It is a Crown corporation responsible to Parliament through the minister, and hence we as parliamentarians have a special responsibility for it. It is because of my concern for the future of the corporation that I want to express these arguments and to state categorically that I believe the minister and his corporation would be acting outside its mandate—indeed, would be acting illegally—if the corporation were to enter into an agreement with small processors or

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anyone else to sell products other than cured and/or salted fish products.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I just want to make one further reference and that is to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, which was the model for this corporation. As the minister knows, when this party was in office it undertook a review of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. We met with the western provinces and obtained a general agreement with them for such a review. Indeed, they agreed to name senior officials to a committee that would undertake the review. The review was to have been completed in April when there was to be a meeting of provincial ministers with the federal government in Winnipeg.

We have heard nothing of it since that time but I know the review has been completed. I wonder if the minister might take the opportunity that is open to him when he replies on second reading, or at committee stage or third reading, to tell the House exactly what has happened to that review and the role or mandate of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. I hope the minister will also take the opportunity to tell the House exactly what the position is with regard to negotiations on tariff concessions for Canadian groundfish in the very important market of the European Economic Community.

I wish the corporation well, Mr. Speaker, but I hope it does not get involved in activities that will bring it criticism. That is what will happen if it allows itself to be lured—even if for good, understandable and commendable reasons—into what in my opinion would be an illegal activity, the marketing of fresh frozen fish.

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-7 as I appreciate the necessity of increasing the borrowing power of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation. The minister outlined some of the needs and reasons for increasing the borrowing requirement. The only criticism I have is that he did not elaborate on the needs of the Saltfish Corporation.

The 200-mile extended jurisdiction for our fisheries generated a great deal of enthusiasm in Canada and raised many expectations, particularly in the fishing industry. As well as the required capacity to process the stocks from the 200-mile zone, the minister outlined the increases expected by Newfoundland alone, particularly of northern cod which is in great demand. There is some controversy about who should harvest that cod but certainly the Saltfish Corporation has an opportunity to improve the quality of its fishery and the product that it can export.

Other reasons have been alluded to in the annual reports of the Saltfish Corporation. I am sorry that the minister did not expand on some of those requirements, particularly the improvement of quality. There has been talk at times of the need for more cold storage, more drying capacity, and a different kind of fleet to harvest the catch, or at least some onboard storage and handling facilities. I would have thought the minister would have taken this opportunity to inform the House, the public gallery and the public in general in more