

Fisheries Act

the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) and entitled: "The Seal Hunt". Every member should send out copies of it to their constituents, so that the people of Canada are made aware that this is a humane hunt and can continue without the destruction of society and only to the destruction of false words, wrong impressions and false provocations by Canadians who should not be classed as Canadians.

A perfect example to cite is that of the petition which was sent out by the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador and myself. In my district there are 25,000 householders, and there is only one small corner of my constituency which is called Plum Point from which landsmen fish. At the time we presented this petition in the House of Commons, it contained 15,536 signatures, and they are still coming in. The figure is now over 16,000. It indicates how 16,000 people in one part of Newfoundland, which is a fair proportion of the total population of approximately half a million, feel about outsiders coming in and destroying what is theirs through heritage. There are also the signatures which were collected by the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador and other colleagues which total over 40,000.

I hope the amendments will give power so that we will not have the embarrassing situations which occurred in past years, particularly last year. To refer once again to Brian Davies, in 1975 he went to court and his case was deemed as being outside provincial jurisdiction. The case was postponed, and it has been appealed now by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford). In 1976, while his case is being appealed, the same man went out and committed the same crime, deliberately contravening the Seals Act. He is laughing at Canadian law-makers, at parliament. He should not be allowed to get away with this. The purpose of the amendment is to prevent people from interfering with this seal hunt. I have no hesitation in commending the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Rompkey) for bringing the motion forward and I am pleased that he asked me to second it. Passage by this House will allow us to accomplish something for Canadian society and Canadian fishermen.

● (1250)

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I seek some clarification on the purpose of the amendment. I have great respect for the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Rompkey) because I know the amount of study he and other members have done on the subject. I am reluctant to get into a debate on a motion which concerns a fishery so far from my own constituency and about which the members supporting the amendment are so knowledgeable.

The amendment reads in part:

10. No one shall with boat or vessel or in any other way during the time of fishing for seals knowingly or wilfully disturb . . .

The words "in any other way" bother me. During the course of debate it has been indicated that there is no desire to keep responsible journalists away from reporting on the hunt but how do we define who is responsible and who is not in these circumstances? I agree completely with the comments of the

Ontario Humane Society which were read into the record. I was one who refused unanimous consent several years ago to a motion condemning the activities of the Greenpeace in regard to the seal hunt and I think they were misguided in their activities last year. I am satisfied now that the evidence of our biologists is sound in the two areas in question, the humane conduct of the hunt and the biological capacity of this species to recover. I agree with those who claim the hunt is proper.

My concern with the amendment is that it would appear to be a move to "censor" the seal hunt rather than "censure" it. That may be a dangerous area. If we say that only certain journalists may observe the hunt we will be criticized very severely at home and abroad for apparently seeking to hide an activity that we do not need to hide. The whole world has looked at our seal hunt. I know that school children have been circulated in the United States and there has been talk of the "horrible hunt". I am not worried about the media; I am convinced that Canada won the argument last year on the facts. However, I am nervous about an amendment that says that any disruption in any way would be penalized.

That would leave a tremendous amount of discretion to be used about who we keep off the ice to report on the seal hunt. It seems to me to say we will let the good journalists on the ice and keep off the bad journalists. That is a dangerous position to take and I do not think we have anything to hide with regard to the seal hunt—there are some other areas where we may have things to hide but from the body of evidence I have seen, I am satisfied that the seal hunt is conducted properly.

Do we need legislation aimed at a particular group or particular journalists to prevent them from seeing what goes on? I think it would increase the problem rather than reduce it. Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to the amendment, not because I am opposed to the seal hunt but because we have nothing to hide and it seems to me the amendment is designed to prevent complete media coverage of the hunt. As long as people do not interfere with the hunt—by that I mean picketing or interfering with the sealers—or have an effect on the species by reducing the number of seals that may be in the area—I have to oppose the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. Is the House ready for the question? The hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador.

Mr. Rompkey: Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, I would think the hon. member would have an opportunity to wind up debate on his motion.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The precedent is of rather recent memory but is not of a very high quality. Due to the circumstances under which we are operating, the House will realize that earlier this morning I returned to the Chair and, while attempting to sort out one of the procedural problems we were discussing under these rather extraordinary circum-