

*Fisheries Improvement Loans Act*

for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) who is to administer this program, to mitigate some of the difficulties which will be created for our fishermen.

• (11:00 a.m.)

I am sure it was with this situation in mind that the hon. member for Skeena felt that section 3 of the act should be amended in order to make it possible for fishermen to borrow money without having to be under any liability to the fishing companies but, instead, liable for repayment of the loan only to insured lenders, as specified in the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act. I think it is regrettable that the government did not see fit to propose such an amendment to the act at this time. I cannot seriously quarrel with Your Honour's ruling on the report stage amendment and whether it lay within the scope of the bill, but I suggest to the house that this proposal certainly lay within the scope of government action and should have been taken into account when the bill was brought forward for the consideration of the house.

So far as the proposals contained in the bill are concerned, perhaps there may be some common ground between myself and the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) in that he may feel that the proposed increase in the amount of loans has moved in the right direction, though perhaps not quite far enough. At the same time I found myself in agreement with his suggestion that the repayment period should be extended to a more appropriate term. Originally it was a shorter period than is provided in the present act, but under the present proposal I would agree that the ten-year repayment limitation is, under some circumstances, going to be difficult for the fishermen to meet.

I believe I covered the points that are foremost in my mind in relation to the bill, and I hope that the government will give consideration to the ideas put forward with regard to further improvements that could and need to be made to the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act.

**Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore):** Mr. Speaker, it had not been our intention to speak at any great length on this measure, but since the New Democratic party has decided to open a debate on third reading I think it only fitting that I say a few words at this time.

As the legislation now stands it raises the ceiling on loans from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and is in agreement with an amendment that we on

this side proposed to Bill C-151 when it was before the fisheries and forestry committee on February 6 of this year. At that time the amendment did not carry, but we are pleased to see that the government and the minister have given the matter some sober thought which has resulted in the new bill to amend the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act that is now before us.

When the former legislation, Bill C-151, was before the house in February I suggested that the ceiling on loans was inadequate and should be raised to \$25,000. In the period between February and today a number of changes have taken place which lead me to believe that the \$25,000 ceiling will be inadequate. For example, we learned during the recent budget debate that galloping inflation is eroding the purchasing power of our dollar, that it has become a nightmare to industrialists, our senior citizens, our pensioners, and especially those citizens on fixed incomes. Consumer prices are rising at the rate of 4.7 per cent per year, and a man has to earn at least that much more per year just to keep even.

Our fishermen are subject to the same inflationary strains faced by other Canadians. In fact, they would appear to be the forgotten people of this country. I say this because everything that they require for their fishing industry, such as boats, gear, paint, rope, repairs and insurance—especially insurance—to name but a few items, has gone up and up in price while their catches have grown smaller and the returns for their efforts have remained static or in some cases have actually declined.

Those who have no other training or ability by which to earn a living, or who desire to remain in the fishing industry following the loss of their boat or fishing gear by fire or storm, find that as a result of inflation the replacement cost has skyrocketed. In fact, the finance minister told the house only recently that the rate of inflation this year would at least be as high as the rate of inflation last year, when it was the highest it has been in the past 17 years.

In addition to facing the high costs of replacing ships and gear, the fishermen can no longer look for any assistance in the form of a shipbuilding subsidy from the government. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we do have money available for the C.B.C., for arts centres, or for expanding the national capital region, but we have no money available to assist our shipbuilders and our fishermen who find it