

Fishing Vessels

The rate of assistance will be 35 per cent for vessels in the 45 to 75-foot category and also 35 per cent for larger vessels of more than 75 feet, and in the smaller category I note that the payment will be made directly to the vessel owners, while in the larger category the payments will go directly to the shipyards.

It should be pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that irrespective of the manner in which payment is made, that is, either to the vessel owners or the shipyards, this is not a subsidy to the owners; this is a subsidy to Canadian labour. At present, Canadian costs have escalated to such an extent that building costs in Canada are far out of line when compared with building costs in other parts of the world.

I think the House should be informed at a later date by the minister of the manner in which the 35 per cent assistance plan was established. It may well be that a 50 per cent assistance plan at this time, to equalize the costs in Canada vis-à-vis those in other countries, would be more in keeping with the actual costs to the new shipbuilder.

● (3:00 p.m.)

The minister speaks about the cost of this plan to the government. Mr. Speaker, this expenditure will not represent a cost to the government but an investment. I point out that ships catch fish and fish are sold in foreign markets. Actually, 70 per cent of all the fish we catch in Canada is sold in the United States. This type of assistance to encourage new shipbuilding will assist our balance of payments and provide much needed employment. A ship is like a little city. It requires heat, light, water and everything that 20-odd men living together for two weeks need. This type of program, as we well know, stimulates the entire economy.

The minister states this is a new program. I take issue with that statement because it is not a new program. In fact, the government is adopting a program introduced by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) when he was Prime Minister of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crouse: It is a program that the Liberals, who came into office in 1963, allowed to wither on the vine. Many of our shipbuilding firms and shipping companies on the east coast were beginning to wonder whether they would ever be in a position to modernize

fishing fleets and remain competitive with the fleets of foreign countries.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, may I say that while this program will not be a cure for all our ills in the shipbuilding industry, it is a welcome step in the right direction. This plan should assist in the orderly replacement and modernization of our fleets and put new life into our shipyards. At least, this was the result when the program was implemented by the Progressive Conservative government when it was in office. I hope for a similar development under this particular program.

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, to the extent that this announcement by the minister will improve the competitive position of Canadian fishermen and thereby enhance our competitive position in the markets of the world, it is welcome. I believe we should analyse the minister's statement from this point of view. I said once that I felt it made sense to meld the various programs of this kind which have been carried on in separate departments. It always seemed rather strange to me that a program of fishing vessel construction was being carried on without any direct authority on the part of the Department of Fisheries to control its development. Therefore I think that this is a move we can welcome.

One of the points the minister did not mention in his statement, and we would welcome some assurances on it, is whether the new program will be administered and developed in such a way as to ensure that vessels constructed under it will remain under Canadian ownership and continue to be engaged in Canadian fishing enterprises. We have had some rather sorry examples to the contrary in the past and want no repetition of them.

Having listened to the minister's statement, it appears to me that the immediate impact of the program on the Pacific Coast is not likely to be very great unless markets can be developed for species of fish we have not been engaged in catching in our offshore waters. If I understood the statement correctly, it will mean that under existing arrangements with respect to the licensing of salmon fishing vessels in British Columbia, no salmon fisherman will have any entitlement under it. This may be an unfair situation so far as the holders of class A licences are concerned, especially when they require renewal or improvement of the vessels they are now operating.

Another glaring omission in the whole picture so far as fishermen and their vessels are concerned, and which is not rectified by any-