

would have declining numbers of fishermen, catches and markets.

The FFMC is possessed of a crushing debt. The interest payments on the debt, according to the last annual report which was published in 1984, amounted to approximately \$1.25 million, which the fishermen must pay. The fishermen are paying the interest on the debt which has accumulated to a great extent by reason of past mismanagement within the corporation. Some improvements have been made in the operation of the corporation, but there is still a long way to go.

Fishermen do not want hand-outs. I have spoken with the fishermen in my riding and they do not like the idea that someone else is paying subsidies to keep them in business. They know the business. They are good fishermen. They know how to catch top quality fish, which would command premium prices if the marketing opportunities existed. Fishermen want the chance to sell the fish at a fair price. They do not want subsidies to keep them in business. I agree whole-heartedly with them.

If we are successful and the monopoly is removed, the FFMC will remain, but it will have to become competitive. There will be something by which to judge it. Other people will be in the market-place. If they do a better job, we will be able to see that the FFMC is not working. If my submissions are right, that is what will happen. I might be wrong, but there is no harm in trying.

Fishermen's co-operatives could be formed. Several fishermen could get together and hire a salesman. They would then be working directly for the fishermen instead of for some Crown Corporation with a board of directors which no one ever sees. Private enterprise could get back into the fisheries business. Individuals would no longer be restricted by the law of Canada from entering into the business and earning a living buying and selling fish. I can see no reason why Canadian citizens should be prevented by the law from doing just that. It seems to me it is an elementary freedom which we have taken away from Canadians.

● (1610)

I see specialized marketing arising. For instance, in the area I come from, there is a very premium quality fish. It is a lot better than some of the fish caught in Alberta, for instance, with no disrespect to the Hon. Member sitting in front of me. We like to think that our fish is just a little better than his, and markets in the past have proven that. Markets have been prepared to pay a little extra for Slave Lake fish and that has not happened with FFMC. The fishermen there do not get that extra little bit.

Local processing by way of smoking and canning might very well be developed. Individuals could go into that field and we could get things going. That would bring about local job creation as well. There could be direct fishermen to retailer sales. I know fish companies in Ottawa which have tried to make deals with fishermen in freshwater country to buy their fish directly thereby cutting out the middle man, in this case, the Crown corporation. They could pay the fishermen better

Freshwater Fish Marketing Act

prices and the citizens of Ottawa would be able to buy fresher fish at lower prices and everyone would benefit, if we were able to do that under the law which, of course, with the present monopoly, is not possible.

I would like to review very briefly, Sir, the fisheries policy which was enunciated prior to September 4 by the Party of which I am a supporter. A very comprehensive fisheries platform was put together and this was presented to fishermen in the fishing ridings at the time of the election campaign. A lot of support was forthcoming on account of these policies.

Specifically, with respect to freshwater, there were two elements of the Conservative plank at that time: first, comprehensive review of the activities of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation in close consultation with fishermen and Governments of the western provinces and Northwest Territories and the second element in the policy was that western Canadians would be granted greater control over their fishery, especially the marketing of its products. The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation will not be allowed to retain a monopoly on this activity.

Fishermen who were well aware of that policy are now demanding that action take place. They have waited long enough. We have been in office long enough and they are expecting us to make some headway. I know there are problems faced by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser). In my opinion, he is certainly doing a very good job. He is one of the best Fisheries Ministers we have had for some time. And he is gradually resolving some of the outstanding problems. Of course, he has to face the East Coast and West Coast national priorities.

As well, when we talk about freshwater, we have to deal with the Governments of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories and try to work out some form of consensus. That is a difficult job for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I have an understanding that the subject matter of the Bill might well be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. If that takes place what we will be doing is fulfilling to some extent a promise to the fishermen in freshwater country. It certainly is an important first step in carrying out these promises. I hope that after the committee has given its full deliberations to the element of this Bill, the ramifications of the monopoly, it will become the policy of the Government of Canada supported by both opposition parties.

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the subject matter of this Bill is certainly not new to the House of Commons. It is certainly not new in the *Hansards* of the House of Commons since the Hon. Member who introduced it has spoken on the subject many times. I suppose, Mr. Speaker, of all of the subjects we have listened to with respect to doing away with the powers of Crown corporations, this is one of the corporations which has been talked about more than any other in the House of Commons over the last few years.

To set the record straight, Mr. Speaker, two Crown corporations were created by past Governments primarily to market