

FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT

Mr. THOMAS REID (New Westminster) moved that the house go into committee on Bill No. 17, to amend the Fisheries Act, 1932, (as reported against by the standing committee on marine and fisheries).

He said: Before the motion is put I have a few remarks to make concerning the bill and what took place in the committee. It is not my intention to cover the ground I covered when the bill was first introduced. At that time I dealt with the matter very fully. But in view of the fact that the committee has reported against it I want to make some statement as to what took place.

First I draw the attention of the house to the fact that on that committee there are some thirty-five members, and that when the matter came up for final decision there were seventeen present besides the chairman, and the vote was nine to eight. In view of that I felt it my duty to protest against the report of the committee being brought in, and to make a statement relative to some of the evidence that was laid before it.

When the final report was laid on the table there was at least one paragraph in it that I do not think the committee considered at all. I shall not read the whole of the third report, but it states in part that:

After consideration, your committee is of the opinion that the public interest, as a whole, would not best be served by the passing of the proposed legislation.

Now that question was not discussed before that committee when the vote was taken. The question was simply put to the committee whether my bill should pass or not, and the vote was taken simply on that question. In view of the small number by which that vote was carried I ask the house to refer the matter back to the committee, not only for further consideration along the lines I have stated, but also in order that witnesses should be called. The matter is so vitally important that the fishermen concerned, men who are employed in gill net fishing in the Fraser river, should be called from the Pacific coast to put before the committee the actual facts of the case. Although I did the best I could I still believe that had those men been allowed to come before the committee they would perhaps have made a greater impression than I did.

Briefly I wish to review some of the statements that were made by the deputy minister, as many of his statements before the committee were misleading. I am not say-

[Mr. Rhodes.]

ing they were deliberately so, but in my opinion they were put forward in such a way as to becloud the issue and so left a wrong impression with the committee.

In clause 2 he stated that fifty per cent of the seine boats were owned by the canneries. I dispute that statement very strongly. It may be true that only fifty per cent are owned outright by the canneries, but the committee were not informed by the deputy minister that another forty per cent are partly owned by them. At a mass meeting in the city of New Westminster at which the deputy minister and the district supervisor were present neither of them thought fit to refute the statement made by the fishermen there that ninety per cent of the seine boats were owned or controlled by the canners; they were either afraid or they knew better.

Then in clause 4 of paragraph 2 he states that the United States got most of the fish. That aspect was not gone into very fully, but if anyone cares to look at the record he will find that there were years when we on the Canadian side of the line put up more fish than the Americans.

Then the deputy minister in making his statement to the committee quoted the pack of fish, not the amount of fish caught. We on the Canadian side are catching more fish than are caught on the American side, and have so done for years, but what happens? The cannery men, who are endeavouring to control the whole industry, tell the fishermen how many fish they will take, and other fish by the thousands are often thrown overboard and so destroyed. That waste has taken place for many years. If all the fish caught in the Fraser river and the gulf of Georgia were canned the pack on the Canadian side would be as great as if not greater than that put up by the Americans. The American canners can all the fish caught on their side of the line, but that is not the case on the Canadian side. So it was very unfair for the deputy minister to state to the committee that the pack on this side is lower than on the American side, giving the committee the impression that the Americans were catching greater numbers of fish than we on this side.

Then he stated that there is no demand for second quality. One has only to go down to some of the stores in Ottawa and see second quality fish being sold. And what does the storekeeper tell you if you ask for a can of that fish? He says: I cannot get enough of this second quality to supply my customers. Yet the deputy minister says there is no demand for the second quality pack. I ask any hon. member of the house to go to any store