

*Fishing and Recreational Harbours*

Again, from the standpoint of economics and cold efficiency officials, albeit sincerely, can say: Well, Mr. Nowlan or Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith, you really cannot support a wharf or a pier there because the landed value of fish does not justify that type of support. Of course, it is easy to say that after three or four years of benign neglect when the facilities are in such a state of decay as to involve in many cases the erection of a brand new wharf. As I said earlier, the Bay of Fundy has the most difficult waters that the minister has to worry about in terms of tides which are over 50 feet high and a coastline which really does not give any protection from the northeast or northwest gales so the cost of building the facilities is rather heavy in terms of the landed value of fish. But the removal of those facilities—and this is an old story in my part of the country as I am sure it is in that of the parliamentary secretary and of the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne)—it is a little more important than the closing of, say, a Post Office which destroyed the social heart of a community. Once the wharf facilities go, even if they are not all fishermen in the village, you are taking away really the last economic justification for that community.

I could take you along the shore today, Mr. Speaker, and show you pictures of how it used to be and you would be amazed and horrified at the way in which inshore facilities along the shore of the Bay of Fundy have really gone downhill. Now, I have to compliment some officials. Just before the transfer of Fisheries from the Department of Public Works and the Department of Transport, there was a very enlightened official in the Department of Fisheries or the Department of Public Works in Halifax and through his efforts and mine, we were finally able to organize an integrated approach to some of the facilities along the Bay of Fundy shore. With regard to the need for public involvement the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) mentioned the necessity for an annual report so that we would know how this Act is being implemented.

The Act gives tremendous power to the minister to make discretionary decisions as to where a wharf is to be maintained, where fees are to be charged, where the wharfinger is going to be, and so on. Many people in this House probably don't even know what a wharfinger is—likely they think it is some bird which travels from north to south in the winter and from south to the north in the summer. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, some people on the shore would like to see the wharfinger as elusive as a bird which migrates from season to season, because if the wharfinger isn't there to assess fees then that's a little easier on them from time to time. But in this Act we are giving the minister a power to determine the life of an awful lot of small communities in this country.

I would hope that rationalization is not carried to extreme because if it is carried to extreme, Mr. Speaker, we are going to see even more small communities closed out, people forced away from their livelihood, forced away from their historic life pattern; the sequence is there sociologically as one of the reasons social welfare rolls and social assistance payments have increased. You get an outflow from the small communi-

ties and often that outflow has only one way to go—it is drawn to the magnet of the urban area, often creating more urban and social decay which increases the rolls. It is a bad pendulum. So, I hope there will be a little more explanation, once this measure gets to committee, as to how the minister intends to interpret the legislation. This, of course, is something my hon. friend talked about this morning. How is the minister going to interpret, for example, this word “rationalization” which in theory sounds so fine. I certainly recognize there has to be some type of rationalization and readministration of the various departments from a practical point of view. The Minister of Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) is bringing the legislation up to date. But, certainly, rationalization should not be the only test when you are dealing with the livelihood of so many communities across the land.

● (1600)

There is another matter which I hope the committee will consider. But before I leave the subject of rationalization, let me say that it is because of that suggestions were made here earlier this morning about public involvement, perhaps even before rationalization occurs, so that the communities will know where they stand in the pecking order of priority or survival, or priority in the maintenance of the facility, and so they will have some input.

You do not want to alienate the person you are trying to help by letting him learn from the newspaper or hear over the radio that the facility in his community is doomed and there is no hope of repair. That is the type of alienation that has been going on. I do not say it is any great plot. More often it is a case of omission. Certainly, if you are dealing with the fundamental lifeline of so many of these small areas, or even areas which are symbolic of a lifeline in the past, those small communities need a better deal and need to know where they fit under the planner's pen. That can come only with public involvement. Members of parliament and officials should have the guts, for lack of a better word, to meet with those who will be affected and to discuss the problems with them before a decision is made.

I was going to digress just now by recounting a situation in my own riding where, because of the courage of one of the officials of the Department of Public Works and the assistance of the boards of trade, the public was involved in what was called the Bay of Fundy harbour tour in which all communities were visited by the various officials, so that at long last the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) could not say it was the responsibility of the Department of Public Works, nor the Department of Public Works say that they would like to take care of it but it was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transport.

We were able to bring them all together and, after a whole day of preparation, we went across 60 miles of the coastline into all the areas, even some areas where we all knew there was no hope for fundamental assistance because the tides had wreaked such damage. A public meeting was held involving spokesmen from all the communities—one of the hottest meet-

[Mr. Nowlan.]