

Fisheries Act

people from a participation rate of around 5 per cent to a rate of 20 per cent. Further than that, native people at the 5 per cent participation level are in danger of losing their vessels. Will they be taken out of the native fishery? Will their participation rate be reduced? We do not know any of this. We must know what direction the Minister is taking.

There are communities on the coast of B.C. which depend on the resource. The previous federal Government was doing enormous harm to those communities that could have been prevented, or at least those communities could have been prepared for the shock of financial change. The Minister recognizes that communities on the coast of British Columbia are tremendously dependent upon the fisheries. When the Minister makes a decision on who will receive the fish and how those fish will be taken, he determines whether those communities will live or die. As he moves the fishing plant, the local bank does not receive business so it leaves town. Local businesses leave town and gradually there is an implosion which blows the community away.

I recognize that my time is nearly up, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to recap the last point, which has been made many times in the House. I hope that my colleagues from the Liberal Party will comment on this hoist motion and on the issue of promises and fairness as related to Atlantic Canada which I have not had an opportunity to develop in my presentation. I hope that they will rise and comment on this as well.

The Minister must appear before the committee on the Estimates and on the annual report to give us an idea of what is happening, what his intentions are, and what direction the new Government is taking. I am hoping that that will occur very soon. Let us have some indication of what is going on in there. Let him give us an indication, and perhaps on that basis this Bill can be moved to committee and we can get this legislation in place so that it can be applied to the fishing plan which is under development. We will see this summer whether it will hold up constitutionally.

Mr. Fraser: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my hon. friend from Comox-Powell River that I sensed in his remarks some softening of what he called the harshness of his earlier comments. I will accept that as an indication that perhaps we can have a dialogue. I will use this procedure to communicate with him through you, Mr. Speaker.

More than any Fisheries Minister in a number of years, I have met with all of the various groups on the West Coast. I see that my hon. friend is nodding because he knows that. I have been in his riding on several occasions and have accepted his invitation to meet with groups which he co-operated with me in seeing. The Member knows that I have met with a great many groups on our West Coast. I am confining my comments to the West Coast except to say that I have been in every province in Atlantic Canada twice and in Quebec three times. I have been meeting equally there and will be returning there. Any suggestion that I have not been out and about where the fish and fishermen are is not valid.

Through the Minister's Advisory Committee in British Columbia, the Sports Fishing Advisory Board, the Vessel Owners Association, the Pacific Trollers Association, the UFAW, and a host of other organizations, I have spoken repeatedly in the last six months and given my views on the fishery in the Province of British Columbia. Put very simply, they are, first, the maintenance and re-establishment of the salmon runs. Second, the continuation in a viable form of what we would call the commercial fishery on the West Coast, keeping in mind the lifestyle there. Third, the recognition that there is a growing commercial sports fishing interest which must be recognized. Fourth, that never again after the treaty will any federal Minister of Fisheries be able to set down fisheries policy on the West Coast without consultation with the provincial Government.

There is now a realization that the fishery is of great economic value to the economy of British Columbia, especially in these dreadful times when we have 15 per cent unemployment. The Hon. Member knows also that I am committed to having the Minister's Advisory Committee evolve into an industrial board. He knows also that I have made a commitment that any recommendations that the Minister's Advisory Committee gives me, or the board if it is to be formed at the wishes of the Minister's Advisory Committee, will all be made public at the wish of the board or the Minister's Advisory Committee.

The Hon. Member knows all this, so the suggestion that I am somehow operating behind closed doors or behind some shield of secrecy is not accurate. It is not true, it is not my style, and it is not so.

My hon. friend has suggested that I could come before the committee. I have never refused to come before the committee for any reason at all. I will come before the committee on Estimates or any other matter that the Hon. Member wishes. He says that no one has talked about the fishing vessel insurance program. There was a delegation here from Atlantic Canada yesterday meeting with the officials of the Department. There was a delegation before the committee yesterday talking about this issue. An associate deputy minister will be on the West Coast on Tuesday discussing it. Contrary to what my hon. friend was suggesting—and I do not blame him for suggesting it—we are very much aware of the difficulty with the vessel insurance program if the federal Government should abruptly withdraw from it. As I have said to many other groups and I say to the Hon. Member—and I am sure he will accept this—I have no intention to proceed in such a way as to leave any fisherman in Canada unable to get insurance.

● (1150)

Coming back to what I take are some mollifying words from my hon. friends, if my hon. friend is suggesting that I come before the committee immediately to expand on what I just said, I am prepared to do so. If that would assist the Hon. Member and his Party in moving this legislation along, I will be glad to do that.