

MacEachen) said it was an oversight and we all have our human weaknesses. In the prairies, the province of Manitoba produces up to 21 million pounds of fresh water fish per year, Saskatchewan produces up to 15 or 16 million pounds per year and northern Alberta produces up to three million or four million pounds a year. The Northwest Territories as well, produces several million pounds.

I should like to emphasize one thing for the benefit of the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis), the minister in charge of fisheries; that is, fishermen in northern Saskatchewan have often complained that they have experienced extreme difficulty in obtaining financing under this act. Sometimes they have had the feeling that the department was not too interested in this freshwater fishery.

A major reason for my participation today is to impress on the minister that there is a freshwater fishery in this country, and that even though it is not the most significant or important occupation in the west it does provide a livelihood for quite a few hundred people. I think when these people ask for grants or help in order to modify or build fishing boats this help should be made available to them. Certainly, I realize that the bulk of the financing will go to the Pacific and Atlantic coasts where the great fisheries are, but we must also take into consideration those people who earn their livelihood from fishing on the northern prairies.

I wish to commend the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson) who last year gave assistance—because we could not obtain it through the fisheries act—in the form of financing to the Athabasca Fishery Co-operative which wished to buy seven or eight lake boats. These are old boats, and I hope that perhaps this amendment will now make it possible for these fishermen to obtain some grants for the purpose of upgrading their boats to a proper standard.

Another thing I wish to mention is that fish farming is becoming increasingly popular on the prairies. Certainly, I know of a number of people within my riding who are becoming involved in fish farming. My colleague tells me this is the case in Assiniboia. I know a farmer who had a 20-acre lake with water depth ranging up to 20 feet. This was useless, except that the cattle drank the water which meant that there was no need to pump it. He started experimenting. He put trout fingerlings in the lake. It has been found out that it is possible to produce a fair amount of fish by stocking a lake with fingerlings in the spring and harvesting them in the fall. This fish farmer has a market for the fish in Regina and other cities. As these potholes and ponds become more and more productive, I hope some of these people will be eligible for assistance not in respect of fishing vessels but in respect of perhaps ice making and storing equipment. Some farmers have asked me about this. I said that if they have a fairly significant fish farming operation they might be able to obtain some assistance in respect of providing ice making and ice-storing facilities. This is the type of assistance which might be of benefit to them.

In closing I wish to mention that in northern Saskatchewan it is the native and Métis people to whom fishing is a very significant occupation. Some of them have done very well at it. Some of them have encountered problems

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because the fishing equipment they have is old and requires updating. Perhaps some of their methods of fishing should be updated as well. I hope this measure in some small way will help the people in northern Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba obtain a greater degree of self-sufficiency because after all this is what they want. They want to be able to hold up their heads with pride and dignity and be able to earn their own living without being dependent on government aid, either through social security or other measures.

Another matter that has bothered the people of the north and the west involves the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. There have been problems concerning the price this corporation pays to the fishermen and so on. Before the fisheries committee last year the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland) and I introduced a motion requesting an investigation of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, but the minister has never taken any action on this. I hope he will do so in the not too distant future. I realize I am getting slightly off the topic, Mr. Speaker. I would simply like to conclude by saying that this is a commendable amendment and I hope it can go through all stages today and be passed without too much delay.

● (1250)

[Translation]

Mr. Herb Breau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, first I would thank the minister and congratulate him for introducing this bill. Although it is rather brief, it is still very important because, as we know, its purpose is to qualify the modification and the conversion of fishing boats so as to be eligible for departmental subsidies. It was mentioned earlier that it was regrettable that the fisheries service was part of the Department of Environment. It depends on the points of view, Mr. Speaker. It is not sure that government structure would profit by the creation of small departments.

Since the incorporation of the fisheries service in the Department of Environment, we have seen many improvements to the fishing industry, to fishermen, to the regulations, of which this is an example. There is also the creation of the small craft harbours branch through which the Department of Environment budgets building and maintenance programs for port facilities, particularly when they concern fisheries.

So it all depends on points of view. In my opinion, there may be some advantages to the fisheries service being incorporated in a larger department and considering the benefits that accrued from the situation, we could say the change was a good one. Of course, the fishing industry and the protection of the environment are two very closely related activities, because in many aspects fisheries will depend in the future on the way we will protect our environment.

As everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, fishing is a very important activity in my riding. I have not recently taken the time to make an economic evaluation of the fishing industry in relation to others. There are other important industries in my riding such as mining, lumber and, to a small degree, agriculture but in view of the number of