

Fisheries Act

difference of opinion, but also as a result of attempts to avoid cost which the company thinks it might be able to fob off on to the public in general.

Under these exceptional circumstances we in the department will have to take our responsibilities. We have to take up our responsibilities under the Fisheries Act and intervene in the public interest. We may have to intervene to the extent of holding up construction until the facilities are adequate from a pollution control point of view. We may also have to insist on the use of new processes for treating effluent which the company had not envisaged in the first place.

This is strong medicine. It is a drastic step to take. Before the Minister of Fisheries can actually hold up the plans of a company he will have to get full cabinet backing. He will have to get an Order in Council passed by the government. Of course, this is likely to be forthcoming in the kinds of cases which I have in mind. However, the firm in question has this further protection. All ministers, and not simply the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry, will have to be convinced that the company is falling down in its duty to look after our waters in the proper way.

• (3:30 p.m.)

To put it another way, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, require the company in question to make such changes to its plant and/or its processes as are necessary to treat its effluent properly. This power continues over time. It continues in the sense that we will not give a full and final approval in each and every case. Instead, we will reserve the right to make further changes in our specifications. These changes might, for example, become imperative as a result of increased production on the part of the firm, changes in stream flow or, hopefully, a marked improvement in the technology of pollution abatement itself.

Unfortunately, pollution is with us now on a large scale. We can all recall several recent examples. I hope we do not experience a repetition of the so-called "red herring" incident in Newfoundland. I hope we do not run into another mercury problem on the prairies or in Lake St. Clair in Ontario. But if we do, we will have to move, and move quickly. We will have to move in and buy fish, for example, in order to support our fishermen during the period in which the contamination persists.

This action will be taken on behalf of the Crown. It will be taken on behalf of the Crown to remedy the condition or reduce or mitigate damage or destruction to life or property. A further amendment in this bill gives the government this power. It gives the power to recover its costs incurred in looking after the interim arrangements. These costs, of course, will be recoverable from those who are responsible for pollution in the first place.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, I could detail other changes in the Fisheries Act. I could, for instance, refer to the 12-mile limit for trawlers. Newfoundland, when it came into confederation in 1949, retained its old 3-mile limit. This will now be changed, at Newfoundland's request, and the 12-mile restriction which already applies to trawlers in Atlantic waters will be extended to Newfoundland as well.

There is more. But suffice it to say that the main thrust of this bill is against pollution. It is part of our over-all effort to deal with this modern menace. We will soon have a tougher Fisheries Act—a better Fisheries Act. We will soon have a new Canada Water Act and a new Northern Inland Waters Act. We will have a better Canada Shipping Act. This is an impressive list. It is good legislation and it is sound legislation. We need these laws, these improved laws, these federal laws, to deal with pollution in an effective manner. We need them to keep our rivers fresh and our salt water clean. We need this legislation to make our aquatic environment in Canada fit for fish to live in.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, is a short one. But it is an important bill. I urge hon. members to support it. Improve it if you will, but support it. Unlike the United States, where the power over the fisheries resources is fragmented as between individual states, fragmented because it rests with the individual states, we have a unique opportunity here in Canada; we can pass national legislation dealing with our aquatic environment. I, therefore, ask you as Members of Parliament, acting in the national interest of Canada, to approve this bill and amend our Fisheries Act in these various ways.

Mr. Crouse: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-204, an Act to amend the Fisheries Act, reminds me of a well-known soap product—it does everything. It is all-encompassing. I have read the bill carefully and it is something of a catch-all, with part of the bill being introduced as the result of faulty drafting of previous bills. I