

Gunderson Slough Harbour Act

controls and so-called administers the port, to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I have no quarrel with the Fraser River Harbour Commission or Mr. Rick Pearce. I think it is operating a good business. It was commissioned to get into transportation and to operate a good port. It is doing that, and each year its balance sheet proves it. Over the period of years it makes millions of dollars. In fact, it is like a breath of fresh air to find a Government operation turning a very tidy profit, and I compliment it for that. That does not mean that in doing what it was established to do, it is performing a valuable service to the people who are an adjunct, at the present time, to that particular port.

As I said, the Commission port was established to carry on commerce; it was not established to carry on a service for fishermen. Therein lies the problem, Mr. Speaker. While it does not want to obstruct the fishing industry, that is not the first concern of the Fraser River Harbour Commission and therefore, because it is not its first concern and it spends 99.99 per cent of its interest on commerce, it really means it is in a conflict of interest. It cannot serve commerce full time and still service the fishing industry at the same time; at least if it can, it certainly is not doing it.

Right now, that fishing harbour is being treated like a fourth-class stepchild by the Fraser River Harbour Commission. I understand why that is so. It is interested in a balance sheet, not in service. It does not work for the fishermen unless it is absolutely cajoled into doing so and then, instead of working for the fishermen, all it does is co-operate with other Government Departments so that some of the mandatory work gets done.

As an example, Mr. Speaker, a year and a half ago, a fisherman called me and told me that as he took his boat into the harbour it bottomed out on one of the sand bars. It got stuck. It had been years since that harbour had been dredged. After several months of negotiation and prodding by me and because of the genuine efforts made by the Department of Public Works, that harbour was dredged, and properly dredged. Everybody is happy with it now. The point is, however, that it was not done until the Commission was absolutely cajoled into doing it.

The fact is that in addition to that, it is making no improvements at all to the wharf. It is doing nothing it is not absolutely required to do. That harbour could probably service four times the moorage it has at the present time, but because there is nothing in it for the Fraser River Harbour Commission, because there is no profit to be made, it has no interest in it.

I understand the Commission—I think I understand it. As I have said several times in the course of these short remarks, I understand that its job is to make money. I do not fault it for that. My concern is that through this Bill we could get rid of a very obvious conflict of interest and let the Fraser River Harbour Commission do what it does best and let the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. De Bané) take care of the

fishermen, because that is his interest. The small craft harbours and the fisheries harbours could look after the interests of the fishermen. That would be no skin off the nose of the Commission. It would do nothing to it, except take from it a small piece of control that is now within its venue.

I do not know if the Commission has any long-range plans to obliterate that harbour. There was a time when the Commission port did not exist. It is made up of a lot of landfill. At one time the harbour was the show piece of the Fraser River; now it is a backwater. The Fraser River Harbour Commission port is built on fill. There is actually an artificial work base for that port facility. I do not know if the Commission at some time would deem that harbour to be an unnecessary nuisance to its operation and would at some time want to fill in that small harbour in order to make it a little bit more convenient to the Commission itself. The fact is that it is responsible for the fishermen; but it is not looking after the fishermen and therefore should divest itself of that responsibility.

There is a secondary problem and that is that in the area surrounding the harbour those vehicles that are used to service the Commission port keep on infringing on the foreshore property that should rightfully belong to the fishermen.

My Bill gives a description of the area that should be removed from the Fraser River Harbour Commission and assigned to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. On the back page of the Bill, Members will find a description of the land that should be taken out of the control of the Fraser River Harbour Commission and assigned to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

• (1610)

Let me say in closing that I am not asking for any removal of Government authority or Government power. In fact, I am complimenting the Harbour Commission for doing good work in the area for which it was created. All I am asking is that that piece of property, which should no longer be under the control or so-called management of the Fraser River Harbour Commission, be taken out of its authority and jurisdiction and given to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the rightful manager of that particular industry. Presumably the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans would consider as his first priority the provision of best service possible to fishermen. Right now the Fraser River Harbour Commission is giving the meagrest, poorest and scantiest possible attention to fishermen. Therefore I hope the Government will agree with me. I see only two Government Members here now, one of whom would be prepared to speak on the Bill. Perhaps there is a slight glimmer of hope that the Government might agree in principle with me that this should be done and referred to the relevant Standing Committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, first of all I compliment the Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen) for taking advantage of every parliamentary vehicle at his