

Fisheries Act

depends in whole or in part on seacoast fishing and to the people of Canada;" and so on. These are very beautiful words, but we have learned that these kinds of words are very easily forgotten. If we look at the words in the preamble to many Bills passed in the House, we find that, regardless of the beautiful words and statements of purpose, five years or even less down the road their purpose has been forgotten.

With the record of broken promises and mistrust before the fishers of Canada, is it any wonder they ask us to ensure that this Bill gives them the input they want? Sometimes what is written in a Bill has no real bearing on what happens in the industry. This is why members of my Party have risen and asked the Minister for an assurance that he will not put in place an over-all structure which would allow him to do anything he pleases without defining under what circumstances he will use the power.

We hope to bring forward in committee the fact that we would like to see a structure which is close to what the fishers are requesting. We cannot be sure that the beautiful words in this Bill will necessarily be the words the bureaucrats remember. They are more likely to remember the fact that the Bill gave them absolute power to do whatever they wanted or that it did not suggest that they had some responsibility for the social development of fishing communities. It is very important as this Bill approaches committee that we look at some of the background and basic principles which are important.

All the users of the resource—natives, commercial and sports fishers—have a right to share the resource. The Bill gives the Minister the absolute right of allocation. Should he have that right without any direction from the House?

Commercial fishers should have the right to a fair and decent income for their labour. That sounds very good within the context of the Bill, but we must have an assurance that we do not follow the more common position taken by the United States—"let us fish this out and when all the fish are gone, we will move some place else and fish it out." We want a continued development of a fisheries program so that we always have fish.

Natives, particularly those along the West Coast, have special traditional rights to the resource and its use in furthering the economic development of their communities. Across Canada many native communities depend upon fish as a basic food staple and as a cash crop, as farmers say. Fish were their main source of income, their main source of cash. Because of mismanagement, overfishing, pollution and a number of other things, they now find themselves without enough fish to eat and without fish to sell. The quality has gone down in some places, the quantity has gone down in many places.

The final principle is that protection and enhancement of the resource is paramount and must take priority in all deliberations. This follows what I said earlier. If we are to have a structure in place, it must recognize the needs of the industry. We are parliamentarians and the industry itself must be assured that it has an input into the programs and that they are continued, not only this year and next year, but for generations to come.

● (1600)

What is wrong with the approach of this Bill? The Minister suggests that this Bill is not all that important, but it gives him authority to control the fishing industry. Maybe it is the words he used that concern us. He suggested that because the Department of Fisheries was taken to court on several occasions and lost its bid, it should have this power. We are being asked to give the Department absolute power to make the kind of decisions that will control the industry.

A number of my colleagues have suggested that we recognize the need for control and redevelopment. We will support that, but it must be acceptable to the people. I suggest we put in place a board made up of people from the commercial fishery, natives, the packers and communities that depend on fish. We should give that board the kind of power and structure to make decisions on continued development and on how the fisheries will be used today. It should decide on how the fisheries will provide stock for the next hundreds of years. These are the people whose families are dependent on them now and in the years to come.

Let us deal with the question of resources. We should develop a structure which allows the people to provide this kind of food to the rest of the country and the rest of the world. We should ensure that we no longer have famines such as presently exist around the world. Canada should make a contribution to humanity within a structure that helps the Canadian fishing community feel that it is an important part of the community, an important part of the economy of Canada and will continue to be so for many years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions or comments?

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, my question to my colleague has to do with the native fishery and aboriginal rights. The Party in office promised greater participation for native groups. The power it is seeking today has to do with the allocation of the fishery. This will affect resources at the disposal of native people involved in the fishery. Having examined the legislation, does my friend find any guarantees for aboriginal rights? Is there any protection in this legislation that would ensure that the traditional native fishery would be respected?

We are dealing with a piece of legislation that has to do with the regulation of a natural resource. I ask my friend to look at it from the perspective of native people, the aboriginal people's point of view, those who are struggling to have their rights respected and defined. Does he find in this legislation any provisions which would ensure the protection of aboriginal rights? Does he feel that this is a legitimate concern that should be dealt with by this House before this legislation moves forward?

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, to be fair to the Minister, I have to say that he did not say that this Bill would take care of the need that is there. If you look closely at the legislation, a native fisher may be a little worried, knowing the track record of the Department of Fisheries, the previous Government and