

*Saltfish Act*

try. He came to Newfoundland and took over the Saltfish Corporation. He is no longer with us, but I think that his contribution will be remembered and it is appropriate that I place on the record of the House of Commons the name of that man who did so much to make the Saltfish Corporation what it is.

Another name that I recall is that of Len Cowley, another public servant who is no longer with us but whose name I think will be remembered with a great deal of respect and affection. I would like to remember him today for his contribution to the Saltfish Corporation.

I can recall other men, Aiden Maloney among them, who have made their contributions over the years. Suffice it to say that the Saltfish Corporation is strong and we must continue to keep it strong. I support the improvement offered by today's Bill.

There is one thing that I would like to deal with particularly, Mr. Speaker, and that is the Northern Fishery Development Corporation. That Corporation is, in theory, a creature of both the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland. It was set up because of a very ironic situation which is occurring on the northeast coast of Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador. In these places are some of the most disadvantaged fishermen anywhere in Canada. They have the lowest incomes and their plants are in need of upgrading. By and large, they are small-boat fishermen. Yet off the shores of the northern peninsula and off the shores of Labrador, there are some of the most lucrative resources anywhere in Canada. There are shrimp, salmon, Arctic char, herring, codfish and crab. All of those resources are available. There are maximum resources and minimum income. One of the reasons for that is that the private sector has simply not performed up to scratch in those areas for a long while.

For example, St. Anthony was part of the Fishery Products chain. However, it did not prosper under the Fishery Products chain. When Fishery Products decided to withdraw from St. Anthony, the Government of Canada stepped in and asked the Saltfish Corporation if it would take over the St. Anthony plant and run it for a year. The Corporation did that. Bear in mind that there was no other alternative within the private sector. The Government of Canada asked the Saltfish Corporation to operate that plant and it did. It broke even and possibly even made a small profit a couple of years ago.

As a result of the Kirby task force, the governments then decided that they would indeed create a Northern Fisheries Development Corporation to include St. Anthony, certain plants on the northern peninsula and along the Labrador coast, some of which were owned by the Government of Newfoundland. Both governments signed an agreement indicating that that would be done. That happened almost two years ago yet nothing concrete has been done to put that Northern Fisheries Development Corporation in place.

I and others submitted that the easiest, simplest and most effective way to put in place the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation was to set up a subsidiary corporation under the Saltfish Corporation. After all, if we already have a wheel

there is no need to invent one. However, there were others who said there were other alternatives. If there are other alternatives, I have not seen them put on paper. I have seen no other proposal that I can compare with a subsidiary of the Saltfish Corporation. My proposal still is that both governments would act to set up the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation, something to which they both agreed, through the Saltfish Corporation, an already existing mechanism. However, that has not happened.

Because this is an urgent matter I want to do what I can today. The fishermen of the northern peninsula and the Labrador coast want to know where they stand and what their future will be. We have now restructured the industry. There is a major company in place. However, that major company will not look after all the little plants in Newfoundland. The fishermen in that area want to know if their future is assured. That is the urgency involved in setting up this Northern Fisheries Development Corporation. I suggest that we put it in place by this spring.

I would like to use my time in the House of Commons today to try in whatever way I can to move forward the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation. When we get to committee, I intend to move an amendment to this Bill which Your Honour might want to take under advisement; I have the amendment with me. It simply indicates that Bill C-170 should be amended by adding thereto the following Clause 2, that the Saltfish Act is further amended as follows, and then it deals with amendments to the Saltfish Act which would indeed allow the Saltfish Corporation to deal in fresh fish. That is essentially what it would do. That would open up the way to creating a subsidiary corporation under the Saltfish Corporation which would become the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation.

The Minister of Fisheries is present today and I hope that he will put his views on the record as well. I know that he sees the wisdom of moving ahead with the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation as was agreed in the past. At least I hope he does see that wisdom, and that he will put his views on the record. If he agrees with moving forward with that particular development corporation, I hope he will give us his views on how we might most speedily and effectively do it in order to have it in place for this spring.

I have proposed a course of action and I intend today to push it forward. However, I would be interested in knowing the views of the Minister of Fisheries. I hope that he concurs with this course of action and that he will consult with his provincial counterparts who are now all of one congregation. I hope he will consult with them and attempt to expedite an agreement which will put in place the Northern Fisheries Development Corporation before next spring. If he does, I will give him credit for doing so. He will fulfil my expectations of a westerner who has come to Atlantic Canada, has seen from a pure perspective what is needed and has done the job. I know the Minister has the spirit and the capacity to act. What I want to know is, will he act?