

Fisheries Improvement Loans Act

the regulations of C.M.H.C., enabling the government to make direct loans for the financing and refinancing of vessels. The minister hinted today that such direct loans were possible for the building of new vessels. It seems to me that such a provision might be extremely useful for refinancing vessels, if we are sincere, as the minister himself said speaking recently at U.B.C., when we say that we really do not want company domination of the fishing industry. The minister stated—and I hope I do not imply anything that he did not mean—that he would have no objection if the companies remained in control of the processing part of the operation and the fishermen were responsible for the fishing. This is one possibility, that direct loans may be granted to the fishermen not only for the building of new boats but for the financing and refinancing of existing boats so that they can get out from under what they consider to be unfair domination and company control.

The other possibility is that in order to overcome the limitations of the particular interest rates which the lending institutions do not find attractive enough at which to lend money for this purpose, it would not seem beyond the realms of possibility for the federal government to deposit funds in various banks, credit unions and other lending agencies concerned with this industry and earmark them for a specific purpose at the interest rate outlined in the bill.

There are probably a number of other items that could be brought up tonight in this debate. I am sorry that my colleague, the hon. member for Skeena, is not here to bring these matters forward. However, I think the two items I mentioned are perhaps the most pressing ones to be discussed at this time, so I will not speak on this matter any further.

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, I regret that it was not possible for me to be here when the minister made his statement on Bill C-195 but, as he is aware, the Committee on Fisheries and Forestry is sitting at this moment. Therefore, I apologize to him for my inability to be present when he introduced the bill.

It is a pleasure to express the approval of my party of Bill C-195. We are pleased to see the introduction of the most important clause of the bill raising the ceiling on loans to \$25,000 because this means that the amendment which we proposed to Bill C-151 in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry on February 6 will now become law. At the same time we regret that the government has taken

[Mr. Rose.]

as long as it has to bring this matter before the house. The need for raising the ceiling on loans has been apparent for some-time and was well known, at least to the opposition, at the time when the earlier amendments to the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act in Bill C-151 were given first reading on December 20 of last year. The amendments which are now before us, Mr. Speaker should have been introduced at that time. The need was known. The opportunity to change the bill was there. Why were these provisions not included?

● (9:10 p.m.)

The earlier bill was introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson). Was the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) not consulted to see whether other amendments should have been introduced at the same time? It is easy to suspect that the officials of the Finance Department, whose knowledge of the problems of fishermen is probably minimal, were so concerned with allowing interest rates on loans under this act to jump from 5 per cent to the going market rate that they completely disregarded whether or not the loans actually met the needs parliament intended them to meet.

Then, in February, we saw the minister's well meaning but rather awkward attempts to retrieve his earlier fumble. In fact, clause one of the bill now before us is word for word the amendment the minister tried unsuccessfully to introduce in committee three months ago. Two fumbles and three months later we have this measure before us.

The government house leader is constantly harping about legislative schedules. The cabinet uses the time required for measures to be debated in the house as an excuse, though a feeble one, for its procrastination on matters of bread and butter importance to the people of Canada. Yet here we have an example of the government itself wasting the time of this house by introducing two measures where one would have been sufficient. The minister must be a frustrating skipper, for we find him here tacking back and forth over the same waters. We hope he will see the way clear soon to piloting our way on the longer and harder courses we all know we will have to take to establish a more thriving and a healthier fishing industry.

The effects of the minister's actions in having to go through the unnecessary ritual of amending the same statute twice in a session reach beyond parliament. The minister had told us that it is principally fishermen from his own province who use the loans provided