

*Fisheries Improvement Loans Act*

house on July 23 last and known as Sessional Paper No. 51. In looking over this report, I find that from December 12, 1955 to the end of the fiscal year in March, 1956, 102 loans were granted for a total of \$99,009.36; for the fiscal year ended March, 1957, 203 loans were granted for a total of \$236,186.43; for the fiscal year which ended March, 1958, 136 loans were made for a total of \$149,960.43.

The total number of loans made since the inception of this act is 441 for a total of \$484,703.22. The report also mentions that out of the total number of loans made, 80 of those have been repaid for a total of \$182,639.74. Further on in the report I also noticed that since its inception in 1955, out of a total of 441 loans, 273 were in the Atlantic provinces for a total sum of \$224,262.

Mr. Chairman, we recognize the contribution of the credit unions in providing for the short term credit needs of fishermen, mainly in the province of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The fishermen's indemnity fund, as I have stated earlier, provided the insurance coverage required to secure or protect these loans. I am rather surprised to find that so little advantage of this act has been taken by the credit unions or even by the chartered banks in the Atlantic provinces. I am wondering if the provisions of this act have been made sufficiently known to the fishing communities and to the credit union groups. I know that pamphlets have been published explaining the regulations under this act, but I have yet to see copies of such pamphlets or publications in the offices of the banks or credit unions in my constituency. Could this not explain why so few fishermen have, in the first two and a half years of the operation of this act, taken advantage of this legislation?

I have in my hand a copy of one of these pamphlets which is being published by the department. It is clear and does explain the purpose and the conditions under which the loans are made. I should like the minister to advise this house how many of these pamphlets have been distributed and also if any of the publications are issued in the French language. We must recognize that in the province of New Brunswick, and to an even greater extent in the province of Quebec, the large proportion of our fishermen are French speaking. It would be quite difficult for them to find out about the application of this act unless they were provided with the details in their own language.

I should like the minister also, if possible, to tell us how many loans under this act have been made since the inception of the act through credit unions out of the total of 441. I have good reason for believing that very few, if any, have been made by credit

unions. It is true that the guaranteed loans are confined to bona fide fishermen, and I feel that is the way it should be. The security requirements as laid down under the regulations under this act are well explained in this pamphlet, are rather flexible and are in conformity with the conditions and practices obtaining in the different fisheries and also are in line with the circumstances of the borrowers which, as I have said, are bona fide fishermen. Anyone familiar with the fishing industry in the maritimes and in the Atlantic area would admit that the lack of capitalization in this particular industry has been largely responsible for the slow development of our fisheries. Our primary producers have, for generations, been dependent on the fish dealers and exporters for their credit needs. As a result, the fishermen of the maritimes have been for generations so closely tied up to the local dealers and merchants that the fishing industry as a whole was retarded and unable to move forward in line with other industries.

The credit unions and co-operative groups have played a major role in removing obstacles which were nothing else but a result of this feudal system which existed in the fishing industry. It is for this reason I should like to see the credit unions today play a major role in the practical application of this act. If we take into consideration the fact that a large number of the fishermen have no contact whatever with the chartered banks, as many live in communities where banks are not established, we can see the need for credit unions to expand in this particular field. It is hoped, however, that in the future fishermen will be able to take better advantage of this particular act. We realize that in its first year of operation, even in the first two and one half years, this act may not have shown the results which we expected. However, we must also take into consideration the fact that during the first year of operation the Farm Improvement Loans Act was responsible for loans amounting to only \$3 million, while it is now responsible for loans of close to \$100 million a year.

I am doubtful, however, about the attitude of the chartered banks and the credit unions in dealing with applications under this Fisheries Improvement Loans Act. There appears to be a certain reluctance or a lack of interest in granting loans under this act. We know how much these loans are needed by the fishermen. I would suggest that these pamphlets or circulars outlining the details of the regulations be made available to all banks and credit unions in the fishing communities, similar to the procedure being followed under the Farm Improvement Loans