

Government Orders

Human Resources Development. Bill C-30 responds to one of the recommendations of the Auditor General in his last report to Parliament when he considered the previous Atlantic groundfish strategy:

"The government implemented a program for which in our view no clear satisfactory authority had existed. At no time did it go to Parliament to seek proper substantive authority for its actions. Parliament was thereby denied the proper opportunity to review and debate the government's proposed program as part of the normal legislative process, to decide on its objectives and to approve expenditures to achieve those objectives".

The auditor general wisely went on to caution that if action were not taken the same thing might happen with a successor program: "The government should present to Parliament legislation that will provide the proper authority for this program and any future program of a similar nature".

The minister of human resources is to be congratulated for the introduction of Bill C-30 as was recommended by the auditor general, but where is the rest of the TAGS legislation? Bill C-30 is a minor bit of housekeeping legislation. It does not give the opportunity to debate the program's objectives.

• (1335)

Again on third reading I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to lay before Parliament a bill to provide legislative authority for those parts of TAGS that DFO is delivering. DFO will be attempting to retire fishermen, their licences and to create industrial renewal boards.

This part of the TAGS program or what some call Tobin's Atlantic groundfish strategy is without legislative authority. I call on the government to bring in the remainder of the required legislative authority.

We are told that the minister intends to use the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act as his authority. The Auditor General has already ruled that the Atlantic Groundfish Restructuring Act is not adequate legislative authority. That act, the Auditor General noted, was passed in the mid-1980s to permit the then Liberal fisheries ministers to implement the Kirby commission's recommendations.

It is worth remembering that the Kirby report and the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act were founded on the expectation of a doubling of the groundfish harvest. The Kirby report saw the problem of the fishery as one of finding ways to market the growing supply of fish, the oversupply and not the lack of fish.

The Tobin strategy expects to reduce the capacity by 50 per cent. The underlying assumptions of TAGS and the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act are incompatible. The Kirby report said that one of the bright spots in the fishery was: "The outlook

for the harvest is that by 1987 the cod catch should be more than triple the 1976 harvest. The total groundfish catch will have more than doubled".

The act expanded the catch potential and the fish were caught. Now there are none. Liberal governments and their bureaucratic advisers somehow have changed very little in the intervening years. Let us be done with any talk of using the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act to deliver any part of TAGS.

Again, I call on the government to bring into this House a comprehensive bill that would outline its objectives and that would give it the necessary authority to carry out the needed changes to the Atlantic groundfish fishery.

Earlier this month when the public accounts committee was again considering the auditor general's report on the previous Atlantic groundfish strategy, the chair of the fisheries committee, sitting as a member of the public accounts committee, allowed that the previous Parliament and in particular the Liberal opposition had acquiesced and never demanded legislation.

He equated the failure of the opposition Liberals to speak up as a kind of parliamentary approval by the opposition of what the government of the day was doing. He said: "I was a member of the opposition when this program came in and I do not recall anybody on my side saying that they have usurped the authority of Parliament. We did not raise those alarms. The reality is that by our lack of action, we agreed".

It seems the Liberals, whether in government or in opposition, have the same respect for the need of parliamentary legislative authority for these Atlantic groundfish strategies, a need that the Auditor General has already addressed. Let it not be said in some future Parliament that no one in the opposition in this Parliament failed to request legislation.

Dwindling stocks caused in part by a failure to manage the fishery created the need for TAGS, turning a blind eye to and even promoting overfishing by Canadians within the 200 mile limit and by foreigners outside it. It is sadly appropriate that the overfishing that followed the Kirby report and the Atlantic Fisheries Restructuring Act must be addressed by another set of Liberal ministers.

Today's Liberal ministers are better at shooting missiles over the horizon at so-called pirate boats from third world nations than maintaining effective surveillance and enforcement programs within our 200-mile limit.

When the government is spending some \$2 billion on TAGS due to this failure to manage and protect the fish stock we have the minister of fisheries and the chairman of the fisheries committee rallying to protect recent government misadventures with the fisheries observer program in the Scotia-Fundy region.