

● (1430)

As far as overcapitalization is concerned, it means a bigger and bigger investment must go into gear and ships of various kinds to chase fewer fish. Therefore, it lowers productivity if productivity is figured on the basis of dollars invested compared to fishery return, even though the price has gone up over the last few years.

Does the minister plan to change the type of licences being issued? Is he concerned about overcapitalization within the industry? I will put all my questions, and if the minister can answer them and there is any time left, I would like to go on to a different subject, but still within the bounds of the sections we are on.

The Fraser gill netters, many of whom I represent and have represented over the years, are losing their identity. They cannot depend on the catch, although I must admit that last year was better than the previous year. In order to have a decent income they are forced to leave their natural identifiable area as gill netters in the Fraser. They must go out further in order to justify their investment. I believe they had 16 days last year, which is hardly enough.

I believe the minister has requested some suggestions from the industry for a better allocation. I think it is unfair to leave that whole matter entirely to the industry. I would be interested to know if there was any kind of government suggestion forthcoming, based on the report and recommendations of the Sol Sinclair report that has been tabled. At this time I know of nothing that is being implemented.

I have two questions as follows: When will we have implementation of Mr. Sinclair's recommendations? Does the government have any suggestions regarding catch allocation? This will avoid warring with the industry as well as problems with the Americans over tuna and other matters such as that.

I am concerned along with some of the people I represent about the back door approach to the Foreign Investment Review Agency. Of course, our Canadian fish companies have been largely controlled by American interests, but now Japanese interests are investing up to 25 per cent, for instance, in Canadian fishing companies. It seems to me there may be a possibility of a takeover by the Japanese without even going through the formalities—and that is all FIRA is in the main anyway, a formality—which is not to our particular advantage.

Last night the hon. member for Westmorland-Kent spoke about the real concern that we have about vertical integration in the fishing industry. In other words, the company owns the boats and the licences on those boats in many cases. They often allocate these boats. This reminds me of the Ernie Ford song "You owe everything to the company store." The minister might recall that when we were in Prince Rupert these contracts were described as unconscionable. In this regard does the minister share with the ex-minister his regret that we have allowed such a large measure of vertical integration in the fishing industry? Does the minister have any particular plans to reverse this? I think that is probably a clear question.

Supply

I will dispense with the rhetoric of how terrible it is today, that it is all the minister's fault and that everyone over here is an angel. However, since he is the minister—he must bear the responsibility, and if he wants to accept the fault, that is fine. The former minister expressed his regret that in his province fishermen have no bargaining rights. Except for UIC payments, I do not believe fishermen have any bargaining rights anywhere. They do not have the most primitive rights of trade unionists because the courts have considered them as co-adventurers. Every time they do strike it is considered a conspiracy.

I know the Minister of the Environment has been approached by the fishermen. He has met with representatives of the fishermen's union. By letter he has indicated that he intends to contact the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans as well as the Minister of Labour to see if, after 100 years of neglect by both old line parties, somehow during this session of Parliament there might be some form of equity given to the fishermen. I do not mean restoration of rights because they have never had rights in the first place, but there should be some kind of legislation to consider the needs of fishermen, who by and large are almost serfs on these vessels. Because they happen to get a share in the catch does not mean they are co-adventurers. I suppose only a legal mind could somehow justify their being co-adventurers. They are more like feudal serfs.

I hope the minister intends to do something about this or take some kind of lead to see if there are some decent, modern bargaining rights for some of the most oppressed workers in the country. These people do get unemployment insurance. We can give the previous government credit for that. I admit that some fishermen in some years do very well. However, if one takes a look at the average earnings for the industry, they desperately need something, so that each time they feel they have a grievance and go on strike they do not have to go through police barricades and face the courts. I join with the former minister from Westmorland-Kent who regretted that there were no bargaining rights in his province. I support his view. Do the fishermen have to go through this procedure every time in order to get decent, modern civil rights or labour rights accorded other workers? I look forward to the answers to my questions.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, I listened very carefully to the questions posed by my hon. friend. I am pleased to welcome him back into the House and I look forward to his continuing participation and contribution to the debates in this place. I will try to answer his questions as succinctly as I can, bearing in mind that we will examine the questions more carefully to determine whether or not more comprehensive replies are warranted. If that is the case my parliamentary secretary will bring these replies to the committee at a later date.

With respect to the first question on A and B licences and the concern expressed by the hon. member regarding overcapitalization, he probably knows that there is a moratorium at the present time. There has been no increase in the number