

greatly the flexibility which has been part and parcel of the lives of Prince Edward Island fishermen, as well as others. This is not to say that particular individuals have not been affected seriously. I have raised various cases with the minister. Because of the rules, regulations, and the agreement entered into, it has been difficult for some fishermen to fall within the ambit of this particular definition or regime.

Implicit in the legislation before the House today is the suggestion that increasingly there will be determinations concerning the regulation of fisheries; determinations in terms of the tax or imposition of fees which will be imposed upon fishermen using harbours; determinations as to who these harbours will be leased to; and determinations as to the use and abandonment of harbours by the federal government, which will have major implications in terms of their upkeep and serviceability. I am extremely wary, which perhaps is a mild description.

At the time the development plan was signed in 1969, it called for a reduction of fishing ports in Prince Edward Island from 80 to 14 or 20. I have never been able to understand the consultation or the recognition of the fabric of Prince Edward Island society, community life, or the lives of fishermen, which occurred prior to this announcement. Under that development plan, there would have been a reduction of the fishing harbours and communities by approximately 70 per cent to 80 per cent. It is impossible to understand the type of thinking which arrived at that particular decision.

I see the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) is present in the chamber this afternoon. He was a member of the provincial administration when the development plan was signed. I do not want to draw him into the debate, but it would be interesting to know his point of view as one who sat in the provincial government at that time. It would be interesting to know the earthly justification for a reduction in the number of fishing communities in Prince Edward Island. That was called for in the first phase of the plan. The Minister of Veterans Affairs, as well as the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment, are aware of the fact that subsequently it was abandoned partially. The intent of that reduction is still in existence to this present day.

There have been expenditures made on specific harbours without consultation or agreement with fishermen's associations, processors, or any community structures existent in Prince Edward Island. Those expenditures were based on expert opinions. I use the word "expert" deliberately. I agree it was not the opinion of the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment. He has too much sense for that, quite frankly. It is to be hoped we have entered into a more realistic age where we can get beyond that type of game playing and manipulation of communities and local people who are part and parcel of society. Prince Edward Island has very deep roots and very strong traditions. Manipulation can only do harm and jeopardize the entire province. I realize the minister is attempting to reverse that situation, but also I know how easy it is for officials to enact regulations and create situations which are almost diametrically opposed to the intent of the minister.

Fishing and Recreational Harbours

I realize the minister is attempting to soften the intent of this legislation. Surely he is not seeing himself as a fisheries czar who will enact fishing policies on the banks of the Rideau Canal which will be appropriate for Antigonish, Albert, Surrey, Summerside—

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): And North Lake.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): North Lake or wherever. The minister well knows, as a fellow maritimer, how we have been affected by that kind of action on the part of well-informed and well-intentioned "experts" in Ottawa. The minister sits within breathing distance of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), who emphasized as recently as a day or two ago what a wonderful policy user-pay is and what an advantage it is for this country to have a minister of transport like the one who is presently the incumbent.

● (1552)

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I am surprised to hear the Minister of Veterans Affairs applaud. If he supports the user-pay concept, I hope he will come to Prince Edward Island and announce that publicly because he has given it a very wide berth over a considerable period of time.

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. With reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) I would like to say that I support the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang).

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I am glad the Minister of Veterans Affairs has clarified his position. I did not think he wanted to applaud the user-pay policy of the Minister of Transport because the Minister of Veterans Affairs is much too aware of the political repercussions of coming even within breathing distance of the user-pay syndrome which has afflicted the Minister of Transport and which is threatening to afflict the whole government.

I, as one individual member, am exceedingly aware of this legislation. The Minister of Fisheries has not fixed a fee, and he has indicated that there is no immediate plan, because of the nature of the fisheries on the east coast, to bring in such a policy. However, the fact is that we are giving the minister a blank cheque in this legislation. The minister is shaking his head, but unless he can tell me that there is any prohibition against him, tomorrow or next week—or what is more likely in this government, because ministers change once every three weeks, next month—deciding that there is a good reason from his point of view, or from the point of view of his officials, to bring in a user-pay fee on fishing ports on the east coast, it appears that he could do so. Provision is in the legislation for that. A full mandate is there. In effect, we are opening the door to a certain kind of taxation, and there are no parliamentary inhibitions that I can see in this legislative item.

Perhaps as the minister winds up the third reading debate on Bill C-2 he will indicate what safeguards there are. I realize