

Saltfish Act

both directly and indirectly, in all aspects associated with Newfoundland fishermen, such as the seal hunt and so on.

Will the Hon. Member inform the House what regulations should be changed in the Department of Fisheries relating to the size of boats and licensing? Will he give the House some indication of what he believes should be done in so far as these matters are concerned?

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the size of boats, we have vessel allocations with a restriction on size. The regulations state that a fisherman with a 50-foot boat can only increase the size to 60 feet. That is ridiculous as it now applies on the west coast of Newfoundland, which is covered by the gulf region of the Department of Fisheries. If a vessel has an allocation of x number of hundreds of thousands of pounds of fish, it is almost criminal to say the fisherman must catch that fish in a 55-foot boat. He may have to build a new boat, requiring subsidies from both the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland. He could purchase a 65-foot boat by borrowing from a commercial bank, which in some cases is guaranteed by the Government of Newfoundland. It is wrong to say he must pay an additional \$300,000 or \$400,000 to acquire a 55-foot boat if he can purchase a 65-foot boat, as long as he is only permitted to catch the same amount of fish with that vessel. I do not mean to say that because he gets a 65-foot boat, he should start pleading with the Government for an extended allocation. Those problems exist in my riding today. I also receive representations from other parts of Newfoundland requesting me to present these views to the Minister of Fisheries, which I am now in the process of doing.

Hon. William Rompkey (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong the debate because I support this Bill. I notice the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) has left the Chamber. I want to say to him that I welcome his appointment. Because he is from the West Coast of this country, he may bring a whole new perspective and point of view to the East Coast and the Atlantic fishery. I welcome him to that portfolio and hope that he will do an effective job. He has the ability and the right spirit to do the job that sorely needs to be done in the Atlantic area.

I do not want to talk about the fishery in general in the Atlantic, but I do want to say a few words about the Canadian Saltfish Corporation and make some remarks about a special subject in connection with that Corporation.

I support the points very effectively made by my colleague from Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker). He clearly staked out the plight of fishermen who make maximum use of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation. It was very dramatic when at the end of his remarks an announcement was made to the effect that the money he was seeking had been made available. I congratulate the Government on that. There was no other way to help those people caught in a situation through no fault of their own, except by a special *ex gratia* payment. That is now there, as it was in the past. I am pleased it is because if this did not happen, there are fishermen who would have no

other recourse this year because of the way the system works. My friend, the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate, has pointed that out very effectively. Now these fishermen will have a way to collect unemployment insurance benefits this winter and to retain their dignity.

● (1220)

Let me give a brief example of this that I came across this morning. In the community of Griquet on the northern peninsula of Newfoundland there are about 30 fishermen who do not have enough qualifying weeks to draw unemployment insurance benefits this winter simply because the fish were not there. Under the normal Canada Works allocations, it is not possible to fit all those fishermen in because we cannot rotate them on Canada Works. Canada Works was not a vehicle. My friend has explained why welfare was not a vehicle. There were no other vehicles available to them. There was no safety net for these fishermen like the one farmers have. If this action was not taken, those people, through no fault of their own, would have been caught this year.

I am pleased that the Government has now come through. I would like to give my friend, the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate, a lot of credit for pressing his case and for making the views of his people known.

Mr. Fraser: He got the \$6 million all on his own?

Mr. Rompkey: No. It is too bad that the Minister was not present earlier because I was saying some very nice things about him while he was gone.

Mr. Fraser: I'm back now.

Mr. Rompkey: He can check the record, but I cannot keep on saying too many nice things about him. After all, we are the Opposition.

Let me talk about the Saltfish Corporation. The Minister has described how it came into being and I do not want to trace that course of history any further. Suffice it to say that it was a godsend for fishermen in Atlantic Canada and particularly for those in Newfoundland when the market for fresh fish was very weak. The Saltfish Corporation offered an alternative. The fresh fish industry in the Atlantic provinces sells basically to the U.S. market. When the U.S. market is soft, there is no alternative. However, the Saltfish Corporation has sought out markets all over the world. It has sought out alternatives and it has the backing of the Government of Canada.

I think it is fair to say that the Saltfish Corporation has not only been an effective marketing arm but has also been financially responsible and effective. We have not had to give great subsidies to that particular corporation. I think I should give credit on the record here in the House of Commons to some men who have made the Saltfish Corporation what it is today.

One name that I recall is that of Knell Henriksen who was a Scandinavian with private sector experience in his own coun-