

Fisheries Improvement Loans Act

speech for a new highway policy based on what should be done in British Columbia.

Mr. Pickersgill: You have no debt out there. Surely you do not need any help.

Mr. Green: But for the policy to be sound and gain real support from all members of the house it will have to be a national policy. I can assure hon. members that we will have that very much in mind as we work out the details of such new policy. There will be an opportunity for members to ask questions when the bill is in committee and I shall be very glad at that time to endeavour at least to answer all questions that are asked.

Resolution reported and concurred in.

Mr. Green thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill C-29, to amend the Trans-Canada Highway Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT LOANS ACTMEASURE TO PROVIDE FOR EXTENSION OF
LEGISLATION

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act to extend the application of the act from the 12th day of December, 1958 to the 30th day of June, 1962.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Rea in the chair.

Mr. Robichaud: Is the minister going to explain?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, the purpose of the resolution is simple and brief. The Fisheries Improvement Loans Act, when it was enacted by parliament in the 1955 session, was given a three-year life from the date of proclamation. It was proclaimed on December 12, 1955 and accordingly expired on December 11, 1958. The purpose of the present resolution is to permit the introduction of a bill to extend the life of the act for a period slightly in excess of an additional three years and to make it retroactive to December 12 last.

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Chairman, as the Minister of Finance has explained very briefly, the purpose of the resolution is simple. It is to introduce a measure to amend the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act to extend the application of the act from December 12, 1958 to June 30, 1962. I hope that before discussion of the resolution is over the minister will explain to the house what has happened between December 12, 1958 and

[Mr. Green.]

today, February 24, 1959. Were fishermen allowed to apply for loans and were the banks and the credit unions allowed to make loans during that period?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I can answer that at once. We arranged with the banks and credit unions to carry on lending operations during the interval on our undertaking to introduce the present measure at this session. Operations have continued and the various fishermen's credit unions were so notified.

Mr. Robichaud: I thank the minister for this explanation. At the outset I want to make it clear that we on this side of the house will support the resolution but at this time I should like to say a few brief words with relation to the application of the act. As we know, the act was introduced in 1955 following careful study undertaken by the previous government to make loans available to fishermen under a plan similar to that under which loans are made available to farmers. The purpose of the act was to provide fishermen with the same credit facilities as are provided to farmers under the Farm Improvement Loans Act. It had to be preceded by the establishment of the fishermen's indemnity fund which provided a form of insurance to commercial fishermen on payment of a premium of one per cent. Up to the time when the fishermen's indemnity fund came into force it was rather difficult for fishermen to obtain insurance on their fishing boats or gear. In those days and even today regular rates of insurance varied from four per cent to seven per cent which was more than the fishermen could afford to pay.

As the minister has said, the purpose of the resolution which is now before us is to give the fishermen an opportunity of obtaining credit on favourable terms to meet their capital needs, and on a similar basis to that provided to farmers. I well recall when this act was first introduced that the members from all parties in this house joined in asking that credit unions be allowed to become lending agencies under this legislation. The prime minister of the day, the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, accepted the suggestion without hesitation. The bill was referred to the banking and commerce committee where representatives of the credit unions were given an opportunity to present their case.

Following consideration in the committee an amendment was introduced upon the third reading of the bill to provide \$10 million guaranteed total loans to the banks and \$10 million to the credit unions. I have here a report of the operations under the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act for the fiscal year which ended March 31, 1958, as tabled in this