

Government Orders

problem with the idea. However, fishermen from the east coast were almost unanimous in their dislike of minimum fines.

It was suggested that Fisheries and Oceans should make better use of its power to suspend or cancel the licences of violators. It was believed that this was a much fairer way of dealing with the situation. Suspending a licence could be useful in dealing with the person who breaks the law just once, and the person who brazenly breaks the law every chance he can get. Basically the system would work like this.

A fisherman overfished his cod quota in 1990 by 5,000 pounds and is convicted. In 1991 his licence would be suspended for a period of time that would be equivalent to fishing that amount of fish or more, which would include a fine above the total amount of the catch. This punishment would fit the crime. If a fisherman catches too much this year, then he loses it the next year.

As we all know, this bill is part and parcel of the fisheries aid package that the Minister of Fisheries announced back in May. It is a part of the government's over-all plan of helping the Atlantic fishing industry, flowing from the Haché and Harris reports. The studies done by these two men have been helpful in outlining some of the many problems faced in the Scotia-Fundy and Newfoundland regions of DFO. However, there has been no study done in the Gulf region.

The fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is in a desperate state. In some parts the groundfish stocks have all but disappeared, leaving fishermen and communities in a desperate state. This government has not taken any action to help find solutions to the problems in the Gulf fishery. Until something is done, the situation will only get worse. While the government should help those communities suffering from the declines in the northern cod, it also should be working on the prevention of a total collapse in the stocks of the Gulf, including groundfish and crab.

I certainly would not want to give the impression that there was nothing positive about this bill. There are some giant steps forward, especially in the area of fish habitat protection. Before this bill, the maximum penalty for the destruction of fish habitat was \$10,000. This is less than the cost of doing business. To put it another way, a \$10,000 fine would be equivalent to the cost of a few

paper clips for the government. Those sections of the Fisheries Act were basically not adhered to at all. However, the fines have been increased to \$1 million for some serious charges. This is certainly going to show the violators that the government is serious in protecting the fish habitat and that their actions certainly will not be tolerated.

The provisions for the charging of company officers for the violations of their employees is also an important advance. With this new section, corporate officials of Nat Sea, British Columbia Packers or MacMillan Bloedel will have to deal with the possibility that they can be charged if they allow for the destruction of fish habitat, or allow a fishing captain to overcatch his quota.

This bill also allows the courts to impose what are called alternative measures at the time of sentencing. The court can order a person to perform community service, have the person publish the details of the offence or order them to restore a disturbed site. In the fish habitat area, if someone goes in with a bulldozer or whatever, he will be forced to repair the damage. This is a very positive part of the bill.

These provisions will allow the government to properly manage our valuable fish resources. However, if the government is truly committed to preserving our fish stocks, and a way of life for hundreds of thousands of Canadians, it must give Fisheries and Oceans the dollars to do the job. Cutting \$11 million from the budget is certainly not the way to help Fisheries and Oceans do their job. Fines are very important. We must show that we are going to stop the violators but we also show the violators we have the means to stop them. We are putting the funds in the area and we will have the officers and enough equipment to patrol the coast. But in this situation we do not.

The government has to be prepared to educate the judiciary so that judges are aware of how serious violations of the Fisheries Act are. If the government does not act on this and the recommendations of committee witnesses, then it has to be prepared to deal with the total destruction of a 400-year old way of life in Canada.

I urge the government to put the necessary extra funding back into DFO. Let us repair the wharfs and put them in a proper state. I mentioned Savage Harbour. At Fortune it is not safe to drive a fishing vessel alongside