

Supply—Fisheries and Forestry

As the hon. member for Bonavista-Trinity-Conception said, there has been in the past a continuing series of *ad hoc* aid measures. He may be perfectly right that these were not of long term assistance to the industry. I agree with him that some of them were, at best, only partially successful, or ill advised. Yet I fear that the conditions which brought about that kind of aid as a general rule were almost precisely the kinds of conditions we are discussing here today, which once again are resulting in submissions that other kinds of *ad hoc* aid programs be introduced.

From the comments which have been made today it is interesting to note that we are all reasonably good theoreticians when it comes to outlining long range solutions for the fishing industry. We have had a number of representations about that; obviously the hon. member for Bonavista-Trinity-Conception has been an expert in this field and I was greatly impressed by the solutions he advanced. I subscribe to many of them. I agree that a number of them are rather controversial and would generate quite a bit of disagreement among his colleagues, who formerly spoke for the fishing industry.

If I may make a comment here, it is that one of the difficulties we face is that there is no unanimity within the fishing industry—at least, there has not been until very recently—as to what the solutions ought to be. I can tell hon. members here that within the past few weeks a considerable number of alternatives and programs have been advanced that might be used to help the fishing industry. I have had diametrically opposed views presented to me by various groups within the fishing industry. Only three weeks ago we were able to obtain for the first time, so far as I am aware, a submission with regard to the future of the industry which was representative of all Atlantic provinces. In the past, for instance, Newfoundland representatives have made certain suggestions to us when seeking certain kinds of aid; at the same time, for example, a Nova Scotian plan may have been advanced, and for very good reasons they have said, “These formulae are not the most suitable from our point of view and we prefer some other type of programs.” Indeed, there have been occasions when delegations have been sent to fight the suggestions of one province or another. I say that because I wish to tell hon. members of what has been, quite literally, a day to day involvement on my part in this problem ever since July, or ever since I assumed my new responsibilities.

I was aware then, as I think all hon. members were who were interested in the fishing industry, that the federal government through the introduction of the deficiency program—and I am referring here exclusively to the fresh fish industry—had bailed the industry out for 1968. I think it is also a matter of record that it was made abundantly clear that, regardless of what the federal government wished to do, the trade was as aware as we were that this could not be an ongoing program. Indeed, there were certain dangers, which I think hon. members will be aware of and which I need not amplify, in carrying on with it at all for as long as we had. So, early in July I met with the Newfoundland fishing trade and at that time advised them that, of necessity, the program would have to end. I suggested to them in July that they ought to start work immediately on a complete presentation to the federal government, which would not only state problems but which would result in industry-wide thinking on how to come up with specific ideas as to how federal assistance might be applied to the industry. I emphasize that this was in July, because I cautioned those people against last minute kinds of activity. As hon. members know, it takes considerable time to work out a new approach and formula.

In August I met with these people again and repeated what I had said in July: that I would appreciate it if they could make suggestions to the government as to the form of assistance, rather than having the government devise something which, in the long run, it might not feel was most beneficial for their purposes.

● (4:00 p.m.)

In other words, what we were asked to do was to wait for this submission. This was again in the month of August. The submission finally came—and I can well understand why it took so long to produce it—on November 13, when my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, and I met with the representatives of the Atlantic groundfish industry and received their brief. That was just over three weeks ago, so that we have simply had this short period in which to consider this report and to consider whether or not the proposals which are in it are workable or practicable.

Mr. McGrath: Would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Jamieson: I have a limited time but please go on.