

Deep Sea Fisheries Act

entitled to share the revenue in the fund. This plea was rejected by the government of the day on the grounds that the sum was earmarked for the benefit of fishermen and fisheries in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and parts of Quebec.

I would add that a more recent predecessor of mine as the member for Comox-Alberni, the late Mr. A. W. Neill, also advanced a plea from time to time that some benefit from this fund should accrue to the fishermen on the Pacific Coast. This plea, again, was rejected. This indicates, I think, that the benefits under the Deep Sea Fisheries Act, which are for the improvement of the deep sea fisheries, are not applicable—I am prepared to accept this—to the deep sea fisheries of all parts of Canada, and that its original intent and purpose was to deal with particular sections of the fisheries of Canada and those sections only.

I find myself in agreement with some of the reasons advanced by the minister for suspending or doing away with the act. It has operated rather clumsily and in light of developing circumstances it is perhaps an anachronism. Nevertheless, having considered the pros and cons, and in my own mind trying to be as fair as possible to the arguments advanced by the minister, I have come to the conclusion that the case he advanced in committee is not really well founded unless he is prepared to provide an adequate substitute for the legislation. I submit that his argument that this money in essence is simply part and parcel of the annual vote by Parliament to the Department of Fisheries is not really in accordance with the spirit in which the act was passed, even though it may be technically in accordance with the way in which the money has been handled in recent years.

In other words, it is true that the amount involved, in terms of the value of money today and today's scale of expenditures by the government of Canada—even though the budget of the Department of Fisheries is far too modest, considering the job that is required to be done—is a small amount in comparison with the total budget of the Department of Fisheries. I would suggest that that budget has been developed having regard to the total picture of the Canadian fishery over the years. The sums we have expended under various programs, whether through the Fisheries Research Board or the economic development and marketing services of the department, have presumably been proposed with due regard to the total picture of the

fisheries and their requirements, be they on the Atlantic coast, the Pacific coast or inland. It is therefore not appropriate, in my view, to argue that the amount that has been paid under this bounty over the years is simply part and parcel of the general pattern of the expenditures of the Department of Fisheries.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, this was the understanding of the provisions of the act that I acquired when I first came to this House and became a member of the Fisheries Committee. I interested myself in and made inquiries about the operations of the act, because like other members from British Columbia I was puzzled as to why this benefit was confined to the fishermen of one region of the country and was not applicable to the fishermen of Canada as a whole. It is on these grounds that the House must consider the proposal to repeal the act.

I recognized, Mr. Speaker, that the act as it stands really does not require that the government do anything. It simply gives the government the right to provide an amount not exceeding \$160,000 per annum for the purposes set out in the act. The minister informed the committee, as I think he has probably informed the House, that in fact the government suspended the payment of the bounty for the fiscal year that is about to expire and the fishermen in fact have not received it.

• (3:40 p.m.)

It is said that this bill is simply a piece of tidying up by Parliament—wiping out an old piece of legislation that will be in the statute books unused. This is a persuasive argument. I believe that sometimes we leave laws on our statute books far too long. But having reflected upon the matter since the committee hearings, I am convinced that the suggestion I put forward then, that if the act is to be repealed, the fishermen of the area are entitled to receive this amount for a special program of development in their interests. It is not something that should be wiped out.

Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be too prone to wipe out understandings that have been arrived at and carried forward over the years. This is true in respect of recently announced government policy regarding the Indian people: we are going to wipe out anything that is not thoroughly documented in the claims of the Indian people. How far do we allow the government to go in this direction? Are we going to say that anything that has previously been