

many of our disabled veterans and others who suffer from disabilities that prevent them from becoming full-time fishermen? Will these people be permitted under the new licensing regulations to carry on as they have been doing now for a number of years, and as their forebears in the province have for centuries?

These regulations as we see them, in the absence of any detailed information given by the minister, could very well have the effect of changing, perhaps destroying, a whole way of life in Newfoundland that has existed since we first settled in the fifteenth century. We believe the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) and the government have a responsibility to make sure that the people are affected by these regulations have them fully explained to them. I venture to suggest that all the people of Newfoundland will be affected by them, because the fisherman of Newfoundland also affects the entire population and economy of the province. We believe that these regulations are of sufficient importance to warrant hearings being held in the province, say by the fisheries committee or some other type of wide consultative body, in order that the fishermen become fully acquainted with the implications of the new regulations and their possible effect on their way of life.

I have had several public meetings with the fishermen in my riding since the minister announced these regulations on November 14, but I have been unable to find one who could tell me what they were all about. Obviously, the fishermen are in the dark, as it were, with respect to the possible effects of these regulations and I think this is grossly unfair on the part of the minister and his officials.

We have had a history of fishing in Newfoundland without licensing for nigh on 500 years. I contend that if the minister decides to defer the implementation of these regulations for six months or a year in order to give the fishermen a chance to find out what they are all about, this will not have any drastic effect on the future of the fishing industry. The least the Newfoundland fishermen expect is that they be told what the regulations are about and hopefully given the chance to express their opinions and views on the question of licensing and the future of the fishing industry.

I suggest it is unheard of for a minister of fisheries to stand in his place in this House and in a very dictatorial way declare by way of ministerial decree that the fishermen of Newfoundland will be required to be licensed as of January 1 next. We are not against licensing, Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of gathering statistics on the industry. But certainly I and my colleagues on this side of the House feel that in a matter of imposing restrictive licensing on our people, especially at such short notice, we are entitled to know all the facts and implications of such a policy. For this reason I hope the parliamentary secretary will enlighten me tonight and will tell the people of Newfoundland what are the possible effects of these new licensing regulations.

Mr. William Rompkey (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I have three minutes in which to answer about ten minutes of questions. I shall do my best. I think there has been a misinterpretation which has led to some confusion. Let me try briefly to make some points. The basic reason behind the

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licensing program is simply that it is an inventory: I think that is the best way to describe it. It is an inventory or stocktaking.

The hon. member, who has been in the building trade, will know that if one is to build a house, one must know what materials are available to work with. We do not know how many boats we have, and we do not know how many fishermen we have or where they are. It is a stock-taking, inventory or head count so that we will know what we are dealing with. Then we can go on to manage and improve it. That is the first point.

There will be no restrictions. Those who have fished will continue to fish. Anyone who has a history—I think the policy says this in so many words—in the fishery and has fished for seven years, eight years or more will be able to do that. There is no restriction on the number of fishermen. Anyone who wants to fish will be able to get a licence.

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Rompkey: I have only three minutes: you will have to let me continue. So far as the registration is concerned, it will start with the offshore fleet, the trawler fleet. It is a head count. It will gradually move inshore. It will be about 18 months or more before we get to the inshore fishery. In the meantime, while it says that the policy will come into effect in January, 1974, by the time that policy is applied in respect of the inshore fleet there will have been adequate time for consultation.

We will be setting up very shortly committees in the Atlantic area which will have on them a majority of fishermen and people from the industry, federal fisheries people and people from the provincial government. These people will be looking at the policy of registration and licensing. They will decide how it could be applied to their particular area. I think that is the answer to the question concerning what is a bona fide fisherman. I think we have not stressed enough the committees that will be set up on which the fishermen will serve. They will be consulted. We would like to leave to them the question of the definition of what is and what is not a bona fide fisherman.

For those who do not fish commercially there is absolutely no restriction in respect of small boats 35 feet and under. There is absolutely none, and the policy so states. Anyone who wants to fish or jig for cod or set a herring net, or whatever, will be able to do so. There is no thought to deny the birthright of Newfoundlanders, as I think has been suggested from time to time. People who want to fish to provide a few meals in the winter time, or who want to put some fish away, or the pensioners whom the hon. member mentioned, will be able to do this. There is no thought of applying this policy to that type of person.

Let me deal with a few other points the hon. member raised. So far as unemployment insurance is concerned, I agree with him that changes should be made. We are working toward making those changes. I agree with him wholeheartedly that the plan as it presently exists is unfair to fishermen. I think it should be changed. I believe what we would like to see is possibly some sort of catch insurance eventually. We cannot do that without this licensing policy because unless we know who the catch