

*Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation*

## MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bills: Bill C-19, an act to amend the Employment Tax Credit Act; Bill C-22, an act to adjust the accounts of Canada and to make related amendments to certain acts, without amendment.

● (1700)

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, private bills, notices of motions (papers), public bills.

There being no items on the order paper under the heading of private bills, the House will proceed to notices of motions (papers).

## FRESHWATER FISH MARKETING CORPORATION

**Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta)** moved:

That an humble address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all correspondence, telegrams or other documents exchanged between the government, its departments and agencies and the governments of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the territorial council of the Northwest Territories, since January 1, 1978, relating to the review and restructuring of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before going into the basis for requesting the production of papers as cited under motion No. 19, I would like to provide a little bit of history relating to the importance of the review which was commissioned by the previous minister of fisheries, the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), a review of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation commissioned under his ministry.

As a consequence of that, a number of well-known and publicly-known concerns have been raised with respect to the conduct of affairs by the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation in recent years. The minister, as well as many members of Parliament and individuals in the freshwater areas of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, northern Ontario and the territorial area of the Northwest Territories, have been receiving expressions of concern from numerous fishermen and groups in those areas with respect to the evolution of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation into its present form. Concerns have also been expressed, in Manitoba in particular, by aspiring businessmen who would like to see competition return to the fish processing, storage and marketing areas.

It is a fact that some 84 per cent of the fish volume caught within the jurisdiction of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation comes from the province of Manitoba, with 60 per cent, and from Saskatchewan, with some 24 per cent of the catch. The lesser amounts of fish caught in the northern areas of Alberta, northwest Ontario and the territories are caught by and large by the native communities. For many years those communities have relied on the income from fishing.

I called for the tabling of documentation relating to the review which was commissioned last October, as I said earlier, by the hon. member for St. John's East because we on this side of the House at least are very concerned that that review is in suspension or is proceeding much more slowly than the previous Progressive Conservative government advocated.

I was surprised by the response of the government in declining our request to table the documentation, telegrams and correspondence relating to this review. I cannot understand why there is a need for secrecy in this matter. What possible confidences might be embarrassing to the federal government were this correspondence to be released? Most of the concerns that have been expressed, including all of those I will indicate this afternoon, are well known to the public. In this enlightened age of freedom of information, it appears in the eyes of the Liberal government opposite that freedom of information is but an ideal. They refuse to put that ideal into practice by sharing with the people of Canada the documentation relating to the progress of this review.

In a public press release under the signature of the previous minister of fisheries, it was indicated that, as a consequence of a meeting of the minister of fisheries with his counterparts from the provinces and territories, a committee of officials would be working on certain tentative proposals which were put before them. By the end of April of this year, that committee was to have reported back to the minister of fisheries and ultimately to Parliament on certain proposed structural changes to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Agency. That report has not yet been forthcoming.

I will now proceed with some of the concerns about the corporation which we would expect to be addressed in that review process and be reported promptly to this Parliament. The original concept of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation was a marketing board only, to be engaged in the buying and selling of fish primarily into the international markets, the American market in particular. That marketing board concept did not envisage a vertically integrated corporation which would be into the ownership of vessels or loans with respect to vessels. It would not be involved with transportation of fish, storage and processing. It would merely be involved with the marketing of those fish species, in particular to international customers.

That original concept was recommended by the McIvor commission in the late sixties and advocated by the Conservative government of Duff Roblin in the province of Manitoba. What that concept of a marketing board has become is, as I said a moment ago, a monopolistic, vertically integrated Crown corporation, like so many of our Crown corporations,