

Saltfish Act

The prices paid to fishermen and the wages of workers cannot go any lower. Fishermen will simply not fish at the lower price; it would not be worth their while. More fishermen will go to Toronto, Fort McMurray or wherever.

The Corporation is taking its first loss for 1983-84. This was not due to bad management of that Crown Corporation, because it is properly managed. It is due to the international economic market and its associated problems. There is plenty of fish. The problem is marketing it without taking a loss.

I have already referred to "A New Direction for Canada" and the agenda therein. I would point out that the former Tory Minister of Fisheries, the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), stated that he had a firm belief in the Corporation and was committed to it. I hope this Minister, through his Parliamentary Secretary when he speaks, will be committed to it as well.

In summation, the Government has our co-operation in passing this amendment. It is a small one. I have indicated the background facts as to why the amendment must be passed. I have tried to set out some of the problems of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation as I see them. We in the New Democratic Party consider this to be a very important issue and hope that the Bill is passed quickly.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order and to keep the record straight. It was just communicated to my office that the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald), on the recommendation of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser), approved \$6 million to take care of the problem to which the Minister of Fisheries and I referred this morning. I congratulate the Minister of Employment and the Minister of Fisheries for a job well done on that very serious problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Morrissey Johnson (Bonavista-Trinity-Conception): Mr. Speaker, I suppose I should say that it is ironic that my colleagues from Newfoundland should steal the announcement I was about to make. I am sure he saw me go across the House and talk with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) and suspected something was in the wind. Obviously he wanted to find out what it was. In any event, I congratulate him for making the announcement.

I fully support the amendment to Bill C-6 which is presently before the House. There are six major saltfish processing plants within any riding. I think it is safe to say that the largest percentage of saltfish processed in Newfoundland is done in my riding. I am quite familiar with the Canadian Saltfish Corporation. I could elaborate quite a bit on it. I want to say that it is well managed, as the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) stated. It is essential that it continue.

As has already been stated, since its inception the Saltfish Corporation has until this year operated without a deficit. I did not hear the Minister when he made his statement, but I hope he pointed out that the deficit would not be repaid from

this extended borrowing. According to my information there are reserves in the Canadian Saltfish Corporation to take care of the deficit incurred this past year.

Not only does the Corporation play a vital role in ensuring that fishermen receive equality in prices paid for fish throughout Newfoundland, Labrador and on the lower north shore of Quebec; it also has during peak periods in the fishing season in Newfoundland provided a means for fishermen who deal exclusively in fresh fish to find an outlet for fish which fresh fish processing plants are unable to process because of a glut in catches. They have done that by bringing in foreign vessels to purchase fish over the side.

● (1210)

If I were to talk about all the problems that exist in the fishing industry today in Newfoundland, I would need a full day. I have been involved in the fishing industry directly and indirectly for more than 35 years. I have caught fish, helped to process fish and bought fish from fishermen as a sub-agent of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation. There are many problems that have existed and still exist today. If Members of this House fully support the amendment to Bill C-6, some of those problems can be overcome with the extended borrowing of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation.

I want to elaborate a little on the remarks of the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker). I do not believe that the Ministers referred to are in as much trouble in Newfoundland as the Hon. Member has stated. The announcement with regard to the \$6 million program for fisherpersons and fish plant workers shows the compassion this Government has for those in need. That program will not be implemented on a constituency basis. The monies will be allocated to the areas most affected and where the most need exists, where the least catches were obtained this year. I congratulate the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) on that decision.

Other Members have elaborated on when the Canadian Saltfish Corporation was incorporated and the role it has played. Therefore it is not necessary for me to say anything further on that. I believe that the Minister for Fisheries and Oceans and the other Ministers to whom the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate referred should not be criticized by the Hon. Member but be given constructive ideas. I am sure these Ministers would welcome any ideas he might have to improve the welfare not only of those in his constituency but throughout Newfoundland and Canada. That is why I will not elaborate further. I work in consultation with the various Ministers. I will make my views known to them rather than seek the glory of having my constituents seeing me stand here and ramble on, talking about what I am already putting forward to the Ministers concerned.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Hon. Member for Bonavista-Trinity-Conception (Mr. Johnson), who is perhaps the most experienced man in the Newfoundland fishery ever to sit in this Chamber. He is experienced,