

*Gunderson Slough Harbour Act*

37 permits of occupation. The Fraser-Surrey Dock was founded in 1928 and its first berth was converted to handle lumber in 1964. The Fraser-Surrey Dock now has six berths plus scow facilities, and handles a heavy volume of steel, wood chips and sawdust among other commodities.

Training walls in the New Westminster area provide self-scouring for the debris which would normally accumulate on the river bottom. This project commenced in 1966, and construction took three years at a cost of \$4.5 million. This project resulted in a saving of \$1 million annually for dredging. This saving obviously more than justified the original capital outlay.

Today the Fraser River plays a crucial role in the social and economic wellbeing of British Columbia and, indeed, of all Canada. For some 1.25 million people in British Columbia's lower mainland, the river is a major source of employment and recreation. Virtually every type of industry which could be developed in a metropolis has found a place on or around the Lower Fraser River. Economic environmental demands on the river are growing as Canada increases its trade with Pacific Rim countries so that any decision affecting the future of the Fraser River and the Fraser River Harbour Commission would have far-reaching implications.

The waters of the Fraser are used for transporting, storing and sorting logs used by waterfront sawmills. The harbours at its mouth are receiving points for foreign cars and other commodities. They are shipping points for lumber, for steel, sand and gravel, fish products and other Canadian goods. More than 20,000 people are directly involved in the Fraser's shipping industry, and an additional 84,000 are indirectly dependent on port activities. Approximately 13 million tons of cargo are handled annually by Fraser River ports.

The river's mainstream and numerous tributaries accommodate the largest natural salmon runs in the world and produce more than one quarter of all fish caught commercially and recreationally off Canada's west coast. Commercial catches of Fraser River salmon average ten million fish a year, with a value of some \$90 million to the industry. There are 14,000 commercial fishermen in British Columbia and 3,000 workers employed in processing and tendering on the Lower Fraser. As many as 300 million young salmon migrate out of the estuary some years and more than ten million spawners return. The transfer of Gunderson Slough together with the upland, included in the annex to the Bill, would encompass ten acres of the Fraser-Surrey Dock and other lands under the administration of the Fraser River Harbour Commission as well as privately-owned properties. The Fraser River has most of these properties under long-term lease and the fishermen in that area are quite content with the administration, to my understanding. The Fraser River Harbour Commission is opposed to this transfer, and I support it in its decision. To split this successful semi-autonomous administration and put the area under a Government Department simply does not make any sense.

For the following reasons it is desirable that the Fraser River Harbour Commission continue to have full control of the area at present under its administration. Hon. Members are all

too well aware of the negative impact of splitting the responsibility for administration of any facility or of any organization. As was pointed out earlier, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is primarily concerned with smaller scale facilities. The Fraser River Harbour Commission cannot really be considered as a small scale facility based on the traffic volumes and the diversity of industry in the port which are not related to fishing or recreation, not to mention the size of its holdings. The argument that it would be more advantageous to the fishermen simply does not hold water, if Hon. Members would excuse a play on words, because the fishermen have not expressed any real dissatisfaction with the current arrangements. The division of responsibility would certainly not be sorted out neatly, certainly not overnight, and during the transition period there would be a deterioration in the efficiency and effectiveness of port operations. Fortunately, the Fraser River Harbour Commission is in a fairly solvent financial position. However, given the present economic situation, I do not think that even the Fraser River could afford any loss of revenue.

Another point I would like to raise in defence of retaining the status quo deals directly with port facilities. The Fraser River is a successful port. The land holdings have allowed for diversity of investment and employment opportunities. Transfer of the land to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans would certainly interfere with any considerations of further industrial development and, of course, additional employment and revenue opportunities.

The Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen) mentioned the issue of dredging. It is my understanding that program responsibility for dredging will be transferred from the Department of Public Works to Transport Canada. Because of the obvious closer relationship between Transport Canada and the Fraser River Harbour Commission, a more co-ordinated approach will be taken on the issue of dredging.

I believe the Hon. Member for Parkdale-High Park (Mr. Flis) wishes to speak. I have provided what I consider to be valid reasons for retention of this status quo.

**Mr. Flis:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I argued in my remarks that this Bill should not receive second reading. But in order to give credibility to the Private Members' Hour, after hearing the arguments of the mover of the motion, the NDP and the two Hon. Members from our side, I would like to suggest that the subject matter of the Bill be moved to the appropriate committee, if this is in agreement with the wishes of the mover of the motion.

• (1650)

**Mr. Friesen:** I would certainly agree to that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** It has been moved by Mr. Flis, seconded by Mrs. Appolloni:

That Bill C-611 be not now read a second time but that the subject matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?