

debated them in committee. He has been reasonably accommodating. The government eventually used its majority to have its way, but that is not completely within his control. He will have to answer for it in part. We tried to make it a better bill, but we still support the basic premise of the bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: For a minute I thought the hon. member was going to start singing Menotti's masterpiece to us in the House today.

Before recognizing the next speaker it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam—Food Banks; the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina—Immigration; the hon. member for Hamilton West—Hamilton Harbour.

• (1620)

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to have a chance to say a few words in the House today on Bill C-74.

I brought some of my material with me and I have covered my desk with some of the very important documents and reports that we had a chance to take a look at, both in committee and in the House. They will certainly help us as we proceed with discussion and debate on this legislation, which is an act to amend the Fisheries Act. It is a bill that, like the previous speaker as said, we have supported in principle since it first started its trek through the legislative process. In fact, in committee we moved a number of amendments.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, who really started off the debate that we had in this House, for some his work on this legislation in committee.

I repeat a comment that I made at report stage when discussing some of the amendments to this bill. The quality of the witnesses before the committee was a credit to the industry and to the work of representatives from all coasts who had a chance to review the bill and give us some suggestions and advice. In particular, some of the advice was from those who really work day to day in the fishing industry. They had some very valid comments to make.

Government Orders

Bill C-74 is basically legislation that increases generally the fines for a number of offences under the Fisheries Act: ticketing offences or general offences under the act and, most important, an area that I spent some time on as well, that of habitat protection.

In committee some amendments were presented and in fact eventually came through to the House at report stage. I am pleased that two very important amendments were passed to the legislation. The first was a unique amendment that would require a person when convicted, if the court so ordered, to pay for promoting the proper management and control of fisheries or fish habitat.

In the original bill, the question of fish habitat was not involved. This gives a unique opportunity in terms of laying a charge and seeing that our fisheries habitat is protected so that a particular person, company or whatever that commits the offence understands the gravity of the problem and that hopefully Parliament and the courts recognize that it is not just a case of being a cost of doing business, as was repeated to us many times from the witnesses in committee.

The test of how good is the second amendment will likely come next year, because in the legislation we have also asked that the minister of fisheries be required to table in the House an annual report outlining the whole range of convictions and fines that the department has laid over the course of time. That will be an important report to Parliament, because it will give all Canadians an opportunity to see the direction and the impact that these legislative changes are having and that existing regulations are followed.

They will make the minister more directly accountable to the people of Canada for carrying out the Fisheries Act. This is an area of the legislation about which there has been a great deal of concern, in particular on the west coast. In fact many regulations of the Fisheries Act are not being followed and carried out by Fisheries and Oceans officers for whatever reason.

This will give yet another message to those fisheries officers and to the courts that Parliament takes fooling around with fisheries habitats seriously. We are not prepared to let whomever it is go and destroy fish habitat. They should understand that it is not just a \$100, \$200 or \$300 fine, but that it is a serious charge. In fact those persons or operations will be charged to the point