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Bill Gives Unlimited Powers to Unaccountable Fisheries Bureaucrats

OTTAWA—“Bill C-52’s amendments to the *Fisheries Act* puts fishermen at the mercy of unaccountable Department of Fisheries & Oceans (DFO) bureaucrats,” said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-Richmond East).

This legislation, if approved by Parliament, will give Fisheries bureaucrats the unfettered ability to put in place their own regulations to govern the lives of fishermen, the ability to give access to fish to friends of the government and to discriminate between groups of fishermen.

Under Bill C-52 fishermen will have no recourse to challenge DFO bureaucrats: fishermen will not be able to challenge such offensive regulations in court because Parliament will have given the bureaucrats a free-hand to put in place their own form of regulations without ever publishing them and without any form of public scrutiny.

Appeals to Members of Parliament will be of little avail if this legislation were passed. The only recourse would be for a Member of Parliament to seek to have Parliament change this dangerous law.

The same bureaucrats responsible for the disaster that befell the northern cod off Newfoundland more than a decade ago and the Fraser River sockeye in 2004 will have the full authority of Parliament to beat into submission fishermen trying to eke out a living while fighting bureaucrats - bureaucrats whose every word will have the force of law.

“The disasters happened, the evidence shows, not because of deficiencies in the venerable old *Fisheries Act* but because bureaucrats failed to ensure the *Fisheries Act* and its regulations were enforced,” said Cummins.

C-52 unmasks the government’s real intentions when it claims to want to modernize the *Fisheries Act*. Its secret agenda is to undermine the framework of openness and public accountability inherent in the scheme of fisheries management upon which the *Fisheries Act* is built,” Cummins observed.

“Fish stocks are already under threat due to bureaucratic mismanagement. Giving unlimited powers to unaccountable bureaucrats to write their own laws is equivalent to playing Russian roulette with the right of recreational and commercial fishermen to fish,” Cummins concluded.

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