

First of all, I desire to tell the House that in the Department of Fisheries there are many excellent officials, specialists who are familiar with the various phases of our fishing industry from one coast to the other. I feel confident that those men possess full and complete information regarding markets in foreign countries, including the quantities of fish required, the quantities produced by those countries and the methods of treating the fish for those markets, and if I were sending anybody to make a study of foreign markets I would make a selection from among those men. On the other hand, if the department has not sufficient information, why should it not first call upon the big fish packers and dealers to explain the market conditions of the world? Then, if it should turn out that Canada is handicapped in the curing of fish, or in some other respect, the department could take steps to remedy the situation.

But three men are to be appointed, and they are to be paid salaries. As my right honourable leader has pointed out, they are certainly going to travel all over the world: they are going to Spain, now that the revolution is over; they are going to Italy, to Norway, to Sweden and to Scotland. Of what benefit this will be to the fishermen or the packers of this country I cannot see, particularly as the department already has in its possession much better expert information than can be furnished by the three men who may be on this board.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: On what text does my honourable friend base his statement that these men will travel all around Europe?

Hon. Mr. BALLANTYNE: Naturally they would.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I say no. That is something that will be disclosed in the Committee on Banking and Commerce.

Hon. Mr. BALLANTYNE: Would it not be natural to conclude that these men, after they are appointed, will say, "We must go and find out about these foreign markets—why they have been lost, and so on"?

If we assume that these men are not going to travel, what is the use of appointing men who do not possess half the knowledge which is already in the possession of the experts in the Department of Fisheries?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: My answer to the honourable gentleman is that the inquiry would be conducted around the Atlantic coast, through contact with the producers, for the purpose of ascertaining what can be done to raise the level of production. The pro-

ducers know who their competitors are; what competition they have to meet in Cuba, for instance, and why Norwegian fish get a preference. I should be most surprised to learn that the board was to travel about the world to find out about conditions with which the department is familiar.

Hon. D. O. L'ESPERANCE: Honourable members, I represent a division where the people depend on the fishing industry for a living. I think, therefore, I owe it to the House to say a few words about this Bill.

I am very much of the opinion expressed by the right honourable gentleman (Right Hon. Mr. Meighen), that the board to be constituted under the Bill will not accomplish very much. I do not know what conditions are in the Maritimes, but I know what they are on the Gaspé coast, where the largest dealers in cured and dried fish, Robin, Jones & Whitman—previously Charles Robin & Company—have a place of business. When I was down there last week I learned to my great surprise that for the first time in the last one hundred and fifty years the merchants had notified the fishermen they would not be buying any fish this year. Robin, Jones & Whitman did not go quite so far; they said they would decide in July. In Percé, which some twenty-five or fifty years ago was one of the large fishing centres, there is not a single fisherman to-day. Such a condition has never existed before.

I am not opposed to the Government trying to remedy the situation which exists, but I do not think the means adopted is the right one. Most of these boards which are appointed are simply camouflage to enable the Minister in charge of a department to avoid doing anything. When a board is appointed we have to wait for its report, and cannot act until we get it. Meantime the fishermen will starve.

I think the Bill is really intended to assist the salt fish industry, but we cannot take the position that salt fish to-day has any chance on the market. The people want fresh fish. That is one of the reasons why there is no market for cured fish. In view of these circumstances I think the best thing we could do would be to try to effect a cheap means of transportation for fresh fish. If you buy cod-fish steak in Montreal or Quebec you pay 12, 15 or 20 cents a pound for it, though the fisherman has sold it for less than a cent a pound. What is the reason for this discrepancy if it is not the cost of transportation? We should endeavour to bring about cheaper transportation and better marketing conditions for fresh fish.