

*Supply—Fisheries*

friend from Coast-Capilano about the concern we feel on this side of the house, particularly those of us who represent fishing ridings, with regard to this reckless and feckless proposal of the Prime Minister to divert trade from our best customer. If the United States is the best customer for Canadian products generally, as it is—not only the best customer but the most reliable of all our customers, as statistics over the years will show—that is even more true in the case of our fisheries.

I am quite sure the Minister of National Revenue, the Minister of Fisheries or the hon. member for St. John's West would not dissent from the view that no greater disaster could overtake the east coast fisheries than to have any interference with the United States market. There is no question, as the hon. member for Coast-Capilano said a few moments ago, but that upon at least two occasions in the last three years it was only the influence and the effective intervention of very senior members of the Canadian government which prevented such interference.

I wish I could feel the same confidence that the interventions, even those made by the Minister of Finance when he is roaring like a lion to try to prove he is a bigger man than Mr. C. D. Howe, would be listened to in Washington and would be more effective than the representations of Mr. Howe. But I have not, and I am sure practically no other Canadian would have, that confidence.

Now, sir, I think the sooner this unrealizable nonsense about the diversion of trade from our best customer is abandoned by the government the better it will be for Canada, and certainly those of us who represent constituencies where the livelihood of the people depends on this American market do not like to hear any talk about anything which would jeopardize that livelihood.

The other great markets for the cod fishery are, of course, the Caribbean and the European markets. The European market is a market that is important primarily to Newfoundland; the Caribbean market is a market that is shared between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, in the main, though it is of some importance, of course, to some of the other provincial fisheries as well.

I think all of us in this house without distinction as to party, rejoiced when on January 1, 1958 the new British Caribbean federation was established; and I am going to make a plea to the Minister of Fisheries and his colleagues in the government who are in the house today to urge strongly upon the government that when the new parliament of the federation is elected a parliamentary mission be sent from Canada. And

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

I think we would feel it desirable to have a perhaps disproportionately large representation from the east coast on such a mission, though other areas should not be excluded, because the Caribbean is an historically important market for many Canadian manufacturers, as well as fish. But it seems to me that we should make this gesture of good will, and I should be very happy to see any of the ministers from the Atlantic provinces who now grace the treasury benches heading such a mission, should they still be there when the new parliament of the federation is elected.

I hope such a mission will not go empty handed. I hope the government will soon reach a conclusion as to the policy it intends to pursue in order to develop closer economic relations with this federation. I believe that if we can give effective help to this area we will be primarily helping ourselves, and in no respect more than in building up a secure, stable and, I would add, an inevitably expanding market for our fish. Because as hon. members know, the Caribbean area is one of the few areas in the world in which the population is increasing even more rapidly than it is in Canada.

I should like also to say a word about the concern felt by many of us in Newfoundland with regard to the European market. We do know that both in the Caribbean and in Europe there has been increasing competition from other producers of salt fish outside Canada; that the French, in particular have made inroads into the traditional Canadian markets in the West Indies, and that they have made even more serious inroads into the Italian market. Since the European common market was established among the six nations of western Europe on January 1, it seems to me the government should be giving particular attention to the protection of Canadian interests and to doing everything possible to assure the continuance of Canadian exports of salt fish to Italy, because it could well happen that within this common market, of which France and Italy are members, we might, unless great care is taken, find ourselves under new disabilities which could be very serious for Newfoundland—difficulties which would also, of course, be very serious for the whole codfishing industry of the Atlantic coast. Obviously if we lose one market there is increasing pressure on other markets, and greater difficulty in disposing of the whole catch. I would say, therefore, that the minister, and the Minister of Trade and Commerce who perhaps has a greater responsibility in this matter, should keep constantly before them the problem of maintaining these markets in Europe.