

*Inspection of Canned Salmon*

Why was this order in council passed? As I have intimated, information came to us from all parts of the world—the hon. gentleman cited one from Australia—that there was a deterioration in the standard of our fish.

Mr. NEILL: That is hardly fair. The letter I quoted had nothing to do with quality.

Mr. STEVENS: Will my hon. friend be kind enough to contain himself? He has had an hour and a half of this.

Mr. NEILL: The minister must not make a mistake.

Mr. STEVENS: My hon. friend did not catch what I said. I will put it in the first person. Information came to me in my capacity as Minister of Trade and Commerce from Australia, Great Britain and different sections of the world that our canned salmon was deteriorating in its standard, that it was not as good as it had been. I became somewhat alarmed about this and I took up the matter with my colleague, the acting Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Duranleau), and the outcome was this order in council. After studying the situation for months we found that the movement of fish over long distances on the Pacific coast caused a deterioration in the condition of the fish when brought to the canneries for canning purposes. We felt that it was desirable to restrict the movement of fish virtually within the district in which they were caught. The order in council provides for a movement of twenty-four hours, and the hon. gentleman asks how we are going to enforce that. I will admit that with clever men designing to evade it, it can be evaded just the same as any other regulation. However, we are advised by the inspection officers, and they are a fine group of men, that it can be enforced and that they will be able to control that movement, which in my opinion and in the opinion of those most concerned is seriously affecting the salmon pack. It is felt that the delivery of fish to canneries within a reasonable distance of the place where they are caught will result in an improved pack and the saving of this industry from serious loss in its reputation and standing abroad.

I wish to refer to some statements made by my hon. friend, because I think it would be a great mistake to allow them to remain on Hansard unchallenged. I admit that his manner of presenting his views is very effective, certainly when it is not tried too often. He said that this order in council stated that the fish must be landed within twenty-four hours, and he then went on, with tragedy in his voice, to say that the order did not

[Mr. Stevens.]

state that they must be canned. He said that they could be allowed to lie there for an indefinite period. Does he or anyone else think that a cannery with thousands of dollars at stake is going to receive nice fresh fish and allow them to lie on the wharf in the sun? The first principle of proper cannery operation is to get the fish canned as quickly as possible.

Mr. NEILL: Why not say so?

Mr. STEVENS: No one needs to say it to any intelligent person. That is the first principle of successful operation of a cannery, so that when the fish come within the twenty-four hour period to the cannery, they will be canned as quickly as possible.

The hon. gentleman said that something had been put over and that this had been done in the dark. All I can say is that in my department we gave it a great deal of study and thought. There was no attempt to put anything over; it was done just as was the previous order, under the terms of the act that empowered us to do it, and it was done for the purpose that I have mentioned.

The hon. gentleman referred to the inspectors, indicating, as I said a moment ago, that the inspectors were capable. Then he spent about fifteen minutes ridiculing the system of inspection we are at present carrying on. I have already intimated that we do not assume that this system of inspection is perfect. It has been put into operation for one purpose, namely to seek the improvement of our product. How is the inspection carried out? It is carried out precisely the same as that of almost any other product that is put into a container.

Mr. DUFF: Under the Meat and Canned Foods Act?

Mr. STEVENS: Yes. Take fruit that is boxed or barrelled. It is inspected by selecting a number of boxes, taking one here and there, and inspecting them. If any suspicion is aroused by the boxes that are opened, a closer inspection is made and a larger number are opened. When these canned salmon are brought to the point of export, generally Vancouver—although it is not essential that they come to Vancouver because the inspector will if necessary go to an outport—and put into the large sheds, the inspector goes into the warehouse, takes a box here, then passes over a dozen boxes and takes another there, and so on, and inspects the condition of the salmon in the can. If he finds the pack is not up to the standard fixed by the inspectors and the department, then the shipment is not given a certificate for export as No. 1.