

Fishing Industry—Beam Trawlers

Mr. MICHAUD: In the United States and Canada.

Mr. ILSLEY: I have not the figures or destinations before me, but generally speaking I know frozen fish is marketed in Canada and the United States.

Mr. MICHAUD: And Great Britain.

Mr. STEVENS: Who was the scoundrel who rammed it down people's throats, to whom the minister referred?

Mr. ILSLEY: I cannot seem to explain myself to the hon. member. There is a market for frozen fish and a market for fresh fish, and anybody who knows his business is going to cater to both markets.

Mr. KINLEY: Right.

Mr. STEVENS: And the one company which handles only fresh fish is the company which insists upon these trawlers.

Mr. ILSLEY: No, not only fresh fish—but the greater part of its output is fresh fish.

Mr. STEVENS: Its principal business.

Mr. ILSLEY: Yes, and that is the reason why it says it needs trawlers.

Mr. STEVENS: Yes, exactly.

Mr. R. J. DEACHMAN (Huron North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to fish for just a few moments in these troubled waters, and I promise to pull my line in quietly at the first opportunity. I do not like the approach made to the problem by the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Stevens). He suggested the price should first be set in regard to the basic products, and then that we should build up until eventually we reach the consumer. But the problem which worries me as a consumer is this: What would you do if, when you came to the eventual consumer, he simply refused to buy? My hon. friend, I think, would be left like Mahomet's coffin—suspended somewhere between heaven and earth.

There is another thing which faces any producer. He must reach the consumer's dollar, but the product he supplies must be within the consumer's capacity to buy. Unless it is within the capacity to buy, then the man has no market for his product, and no pleas on behalf of the basic producer will solve the problem. It must be solved by an adjustment in our fundamental economics.

I was down in Nova Scotia last summer and, while there, made a study of the fishing question. Between 1928, which was a banner year in Canadian production, and 1936, when we were just crawling out of the depression,

[Mr. Stevens.]

there was a decline in the volume of fish landings in Nova Scotia to the extent of 1.9 per cent. But the value of fish landed in that province declined during that period by twenty-six per cent. During the same period there was an increase of sixteen per cent in the total number of fishermen. The result was that a production, which had declined twenty-six per cent, had to be distributed among a number of men which had increased by sixteen per cent. The result was that the earnings of the fishermen declined from \$467 to \$300. As that includes the entire earning of all fishermen, whether engaged in trawlers, schooners or inshore fisheries, we get some conception of how small must have been the reward of the average inshore fisherman of Nova Scotia. And the strange thing about it is that during every period of depression, so far as I was able to trace from the records, the number of inshore fishermen increased. As a result, they were the producers of fish in greater volume, which fell upon the open market, and therefore there was a decline in the price.

During the period between 1928 and 1936 the volume of fish produced by the offshore fishermen decreased roughly by 250,000 hundredweight, and the increased catch of the inshore fishermen was roughly 204,000 hundredweight. During this same period the number of inshore fishermen increased from 13,764 to 16,800, and the number of offshore fishermen declined from 2,093 to 1,559. It is quite evident it was not the increase in production of the offshore fishermen, trawlers or schooners which affected the price of fish, but it was because economic conditions in Nova Scotia had declined, and practically everybody in that province—I was going to say "is born with a fishing line in his hand," but that would be carrying it too far—is at least capable of fishing. The result is that during a period of hard times men go back to the fishing grounds, increase the production of fish, and in a time of declining demand there necessarily is a sharp decline in the price of fish. That decline has been produced primarily by the inshore fishermen, and not by the offshore fishermen.

I ask this question: What are we going to do with this problem? Here are men working for an extremely low wage, a wage which is not consistent with Canadian standards of living. I present to my hon. friends from Nova Scotia this very simple question: Do they not think that with a standard of living as low as it was among the inshore fishermen of Nova Scotia in the last few years, it might be advisable to devise means which would increase the number of men engaged on the shore in processing the fish, in getting them