

OUR MEDITER-RANEAN MARKET.

Scientist to Assist Fish Syndicate -- Lieut. Col. Bernard Outlines Proposals.

Correspondence Between Trade Commissioner Bernard and Board of Trade.

NAPLES, March 24.

Secretary Board of Trade.

St. John's, Nfld.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th inst. relative to a report that the Italian Government, in conjunction with Germany, were endeavouring to form a syndicate to fish North of the German Government and dry fish at Emden, and that the fish to be admitted into Italy free of duty.

I have the honor to report to you the kindness of Lt. Col. Bernard, representative of the Government of Newfoundland in Italy, in being able to peruse a confidential pamphlet printed by "Square" from which it appears clear that an endeavour is being made to form a Company called "Societa Italiana Industria Pesca," at the instance of H. R. H. Ferdinand of the Prince of Udine. The pamphlet contains a list of large trawlers on the sea and the Company's account in the North Sea and on the coast of Iceland. Arrangements have been made to ensure the existence of a fishing base in Germany, where there will be wharves, facilities for fitting out the trawlers and dry fish establishments. Bonded warehouses will be provided at this German port which will enable the fish to be landed for preparation without duty, and will also provide space for the fitting out and repair of the vessels, and the provisions of the crew.

The Italian Government, however, and it seems to have been thoroughly thrashed out in Newfoundland--there is no doubt in my opinion that its universal application here as between importer and retailer has had a disastrous effect on prices.

Dear Sirs--Now that the importation of Codfish into this country has practically ceased for the season, I should like to draw your attention to certain facts which have come under my personal observation, and which in a small way may help to clear the present situation and improve matters next year.

CONSIGNMENTS.

Whatever may be said on this subject is between exporter and importer, and it seems to have been thoroughly thrashed out in Newfoundland--there is no doubt in my opinion that its universal application here as between importer and retailer has had a disastrous effect on prices.

Further, the Government has been and are actually engaged in finding ways and means of lowering the cost of living, and they mean business. For nearly a year, a Syndicate presided over by H.R.H. the Prince of Udine has been engaged in devising measures and forming plans which will enable the Italians to catch, cure and import all the codfish they require. Their "field of action" is to be the North Sea and Icelandic waters and the idea is that Germany by way of reparations should furnish a suitable base, trawlers, fishing-gear, etc., and Italy the necessary crews, 7200 tons of salt cod are to be delivered into this country free of duty, the price paid to be lire 276 per kilo, or Lire 136 per

during the last four or five months, and will continue to do so unless shippers as a whole take drastic steps to put an end to it. At this present moment, except where outright sales were made in Newfoundland, we are indirectly in the hands of every small dealer in the land for it is he who, finding that he can get all the fresh fish he requires without drawing on his resources, if not from one merchant then from another, finally fixes the price the shipper is to receive. And however well organized the wholesale dealer's business may be, it is evident that he cannot control the hundreds of small shopkeepers who handle his fish, nor can he with any likelihood of success dictate his own terms and have them carried out. Under these circumstances, it was to be expected that no serious efforts would be made to keep up prices, except by the unfortunate few who bought outright and were powerless; and the result is that net returns for the best quality of shore now range round about 30%.

I venture to suggest that no other factor has had so much to do with bringing about the present ruinous state of the market, and to express my opinion that there will be no change for the better in the situation, unless shippers take the matter in hand and demand that importers shall sell their fish on a cash basis.

QUALITY.

The percentage of "seconds" has been too great. The time has now passed when consumers were willing to accept any quality of fish almost at any price; they require their money's worth and feel bound to get it. The fact that there is practically no "prime" left in the market and that the stocks of No. 2 are sufficient to last out the season, speaks for itself, and it is possible that a better understanding between merchant and fisherman would go far to raise the standard of quality and to net better results. As far as I have been able to observe, a great deal of the fish has been too heavily salted, some very rough, and a fair amount skin-beated, while qualities have been so mixed in the same casks that buyers have been given many opportunities of avoiding what would otherwise have been heavy losses.

This last point is a serious matter for the shippers; for, when such a case occurs, it is no longer a question of the difference in price (two or three shillings) between "prime" and "seconds"; it is considered a breach of contract and the importer does one of three things:--

(a) Refuses to take delivery,

(b) Offers to sell for account of shipper,

(c) Takes legal proceedings against the shipper.

Which ever course of action is taken the shipper is bound to be the sufferer, and it has happened that, whereas the fish had been properly culled, packed and labelled a loss of half a crown per quintal might have been incurred, the exporter has had to refund as high a sum as 21- the remedy is obvious.

QUANTITY.

The quantity of shore imported has not been excessive; but unfortunately the amount sufficient for one year's consumption has been crowded into six months with the attendant result that prices have steadily declined and show no sign of recovery though there cannot be much more fish to come forward this season. A carefully planned system for the regulating of shipments, based upon the periodical requirements of the consumer, would appear to be a necessity if we are to get remunerative prices throughout the year.

PRICES.

Up to less than two years ago, Italy was in the hands of the communists; the whole economic system of the country was dislocated; farming was discouraged and even forbidden; cattle were left to die wholesale in the fields; crops lay rotting on the ground and no one dared raise a finger. Now, however, thanks to the strong measures taken by a business-like and popular government, communism has been crushed and comparative peace reigns in the land; the peasant is again hard at work in the fields and his home produce reaches town and village in abundance. At the beginning of the season he was actually able to place such foodstuffs as beef, mutton, pork, etc., on the market at a cheaper rate than the retailer could offer. Now, the consumer is as philanthropist, and however savoury a cod-stake may seem to him he will not hesitate to favor a joint of beef if it costs him a few lire less per kilo.

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may be purchased in Germany on account of reparations, in accordance with agreements which have recently been concluded by the two Governments.

The law relative to fisheries, approved by the Italian Parliament in March of 1922 grants to Italian fishing enterprises exemption from duty for the importation of preserved fish and exempts them also, for a period of ten years, from the tax on "ricchezza mobile" and all other taxes on industrial profits, up to a limit of 10 per cent. In view of the facts set forth above, the Directors of the Company call upon the public to subscribe for shares, and a form of subscription is annexed to the pamphlet.

It will be seen that in the body of the pamphlet the prospect of complete exemption from customs duty is to be held out to the public as an inducement to subscribe, but this does not appear at first sight to be in complete agreement with the forecast of receipts and expenditures which is annexed to the document. On the receipt side figures "Sale of 7200 tons of salt cod delivered in Italy and passed through the Custom Houses at Lire 2.72 per kilo," but this may mean that the Cod will have to pay 2.72 for Custom House charges, similar to those paid for instance, by Embassies and Governments when they import goods from abroad, and not actual duty. The results of the sale are estimated at Lire 19,554,000 and the profits are put down as Lire 2,554,000. I may add, on information which I have received from a good source, that the scheme by no means finds universal favor among the Naples firms who deal in codfish, and that it is probable that if the operations are started it will be found that Italian fishermen, who as you are aware are not accustomed to fish in any but fine weather, will be unable to cope with the very rough seas and great cold of the Northern and Arctic seas.

In conclusion I would call your attention to my correspondence with Mr. H. Lloyd Thomas ending with my letter of the 17th of February, 1922, and to the fact that information and literature relative to the Newfoundland Fisheries was supplied by H. R. H. the Prince of Udine by H. M. Emden in December, 1921, and February, 1922. It now seems clear that this information was asked, in order that it might be turned against British interests when the Company allied to above was formed.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) PHILIP A. SOMERS COCKS, H.R.H. Consul-General.

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Home Furnishing Sale

Now Proceeding at the Royal Stores

For everything that pertains to housekeeping, this Store has a reputation, which has been built on the values consistently given.

Magnificent stocks of Household Furnishing Goods including Carpets, Rugs, Curtains, Curtain materials, etc., will be offered at reduced prices throughout this week, many of the lines quoted here will suggest themselves as timely and much needed bargains.

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In a fine range of colors and designs.

Velvet Pile; sizes 2 x 2 1/2 yards. Reg. \$30.00 each for \$27.00

Reversible Turkish; size 3 1/4 x 11 1/2 feet. Reg. \$27.00 each for \$25.30

Size 9 x 12 feet. Reg. \$34.50 each for \$31.05

Tapestry; size 3 x 4 yards. Reg. \$39.00 each for \$35.10

Reg. \$36.00 each for \$32.40

Velvet Pile, Fawn and Red; size 4 1/2 x 6 ft. Reg. \$19.50 each for \$18.15

Velvet Pile, In Grey, Rose, Green, Red; size 9 x 9 feet. Reg. \$54.50 each for \$49.05

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Tapestry; size 18 inches wide. Reg. \$1.50 yard for \$1.25

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27 inches wide. Reg. \$2.20 yard for \$1.95

Velvet Pile; Green; size 18 inch. Reg. \$3.35 yard for \$3.02

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Door Mats.

Tapestry, without fringe; size 12 x 27 inch. Reg. \$1.10 each for 90c.

13 x 29 inch. Reg. \$1.25 each for \$1.15

Size 11 x 27 inch. Reg. \$1.40 each for \$1.25

Mottled with fringed ends. Jute; Size 12 x 32. Reg. 85c. each for 77c.

Velvet; Size 12 x 34. Reg. \$1.45 each for \$1.31

Axminster; Size 11 x 32. Reg. \$1.85 each for \$1.40

Reg. \$1.85 each for \$1.87

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Plain fibre Mats in natural colors.

Size 15 x 24. Reg. \$1.50 each for \$1.15

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Size 18 x 27. Reg. \$1.50 each for \$1.05

Size 20 x 33. Reg. \$1.50 each for \$1.20

Size 21 x 33. Reg. \$1.85 each for \$1.67

Size 21 x 33. Reg. \$2.35 each for \$2.12

With fancy centres.

Size 18 x 28. Reg. \$1.25 each for \$1.15

Size 18 x 30. Reg. \$1.55 each for \$1.40

Size 14 x 24. Reg. \$1.75 each for \$1.55

Size 20 x 25. Reg. \$2.00 each for \$1.80

Size 16 x 27. Reg. \$2.25 each for \$2.05

Size 20 x 33. Reg. \$3.35 each for \$3.02

Tapestry Rugs.

Size 27 x 54. Reg. \$2.00 each for \$2.70

Size 27 x 54. Reg. \$3.25 each for \$3.95

Velvet Pile Rugs.

Size 27 x 52. Reg. \$4.00 each for \$3.60

Size 27 x 54. Reg. \$5.25 each for \$4.75

Size 27 x 54. Reg. \$5.75 each for \$5.15

Size 24 x 49. Reg. \$3.90 each for \$3.50

Axminster Rugs.

In handsome new designs; fringed ends.

Size 22 x 58. Reg. \$ 5.50 each for \$ 5.95

Size 22 x 58. Reg. \$ 6.40 each for \$ 7.50

Size 27 x 70. Reg. \$ 8.00 each for \$ 8.10

Size 27 x 70. Reg. \$ 9.00 each for \$ 9.25

Size 32 x 78. Reg. \$11.50 each for \$10.85

Size 35 x 78. Reg. \$13.25 each for \$11.95

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In Crimson, Green, Gold and Black, hemmed ends.

Size 27 x 60. Reg. \$10.75 each for \$ 9.95

Size 20 x 60. Reg. \$12.00 each for \$10.50