

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

ROOM 425, HOUSE OF COMMONS,

WEDNESDAY, March 13, 1929

The Select Standing Committee on Marine and Fisheries met at 11 o'clock a.m., the Chairman, Mr. Duff, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN: On Monday we decided to adjourn until this morning in order to give Father Boudreau an opportunity to be heard before the Committee. Father Boudreau is here from Nova Scotia and he is very much interested in the fisheries of that province, and especially in the County of Richmond where he lives.

REVEREND FATHER ALFRED BOUDREAU, called and sworn.

By the Chairman:

Q. What is your full name, Father?—A. Alfred Boudreau.

Q. Of where?—A. Petite de Grat.

Mr. CHAIRMAN and GENTLEMEN: I am here by the good grace of Providence undoubtedly, also through the courtesy of your genial Chairman, and the goodwill of your honourable body, for all of which I am very thankful. I was sent here as a delegate of the fishermen of eastern Nova Scotia, who have organized groups in six of the eastern counties of Nova Scotia. They have subscribed to pay my expenses here.

Some two years ago we started an organization of the fishermen down there. At the present time, we have about 55 per cent of the fishermen enrolled and they are coming in all the time. We expect that within a few years' time we will have the whole of the eastern coast of the island organized.

As you are no doubt aware, about two years ago some of those interested in the fisheries—clergymen, laymen and fishermen—alarmed by conditions which were rapidly growing worse, and alarmed at the rapid increase of the exodus of our fishermen, decided that some effort should be made to stem this tide of emigration among our people, and to see if something could not be done to alleviate the distress. I was one of the first to cast in my lot with the fishermen. I had before my eyes—and I still have—the very gruesome picture of distress and poverty, numerous heads of families, fishermen, working hard, facing death itself sometimes in storms and unfortunately losing their lives too often—I lost three men in one week in the fall of 1927—unable to get the bare necessities of life. I found in many homes evident signs of undernourishment—little houses with just a kitchen room and sitting room combined. Meat in many of those homes was a luxury. I found that the children could not have the proper amount of milk that they should have. Why, the very picture of those people walking along the street was enough to show that they were undernourished. I found a large number of children unable to attend school in the winter time for lack of proper clothing, and I found a still larger number had to be taken from school at an early age, say around the age of twelve, in order to help their fathers fish. I went around the coast, and everywhere I went I found signs of poverty and distress. I do not mean the western part of Nova Scotia. Conditions are a little better up there. And, strange to say, up there from Halifax west the companies have always been able—I do not know for what

[Rev. Father Alfred Boudreau.]