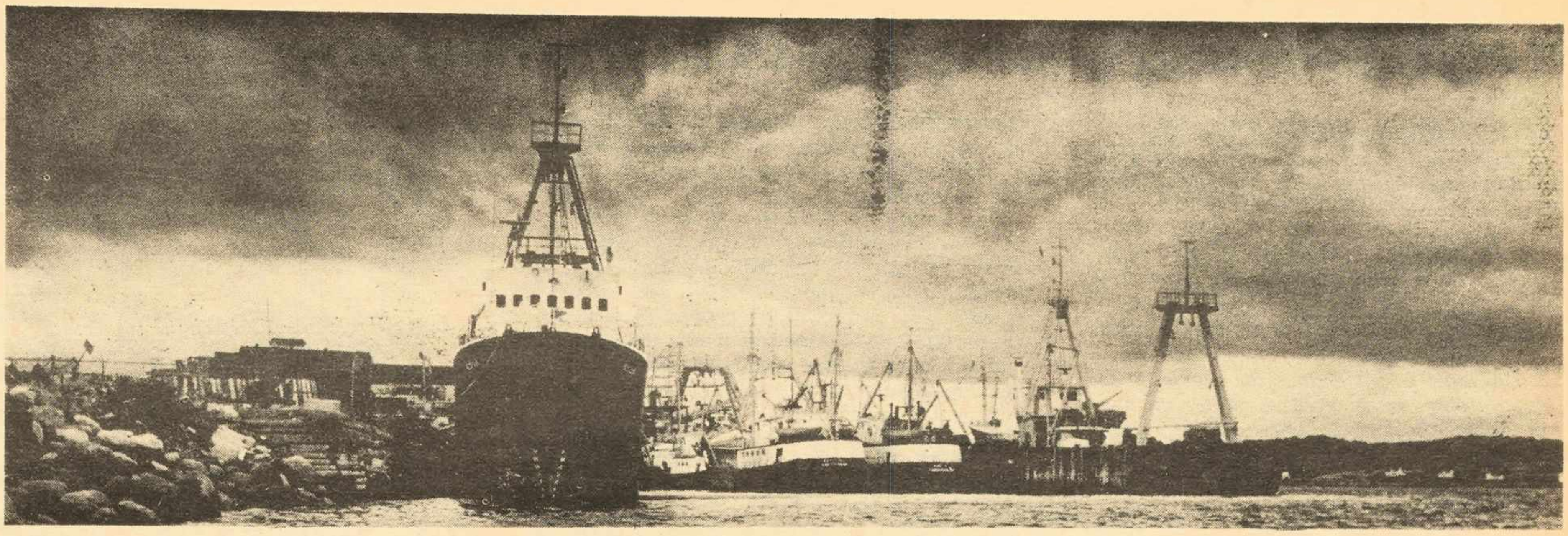

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Reid and Carter of course have a point in saying that Canadians should move to take over the species now harvested by the foreigners. And they add that under any joint ventures Canadian control and equity should dominate. But even if this is so, what "Canadians" are they talking about?

This brings us back to H.B. Nickerson and George Weston. If the federal government were to lay down hundreds of millions of dollars for new superships, who would likely be the beneficiaries except the corporations? And if not, whose "equity" and "control" would dominate in joint ventures?

. . .the fisheries department is just one desk in the corner at Environment Canada.

An organizer for the new Maritime Fishermen's Union, which is trying to unionize the inshore fishermen, points out the ultimate likelihood: foreign-operated freezer-trawlers, with Canadian corporations having a majority of equity (probably financed with public funds), catching and processing fish on the high seas and shipping directly to Europe. Possibly, too, since Canadian crews for freezer-trawlers would be hard to get, the workforce on board would continue to be foreigners.

Given such "benefits" to Canadians, there is virtue in simply letting the Russians and others to go on fishing and charging them whatever the traffic will bear in terms of licencing fees.

But what about the LeBlanc approach? This is: take a hard line against foreign involvement and any quick buildup of Canadian capacity and wait for the stocks to recover, thereby giving the inshore fishermen a chance to participate in the benefits of the new management zone.

The risk here is that the European market may not wait ten years for the fish to recover. And there's another, even graver, pitfall. If the Canadian fishery is backward, it could until now at least pride itself on the fact that the American fishery was even more backward, thanks to Canadian federal subsidies for the building of fishing boats that did not exist in the U.S. Canadians, in fact, have traditionally caught fish off American shores and landed them in American ports, much to the dismay of American fishermen. The American market consumes 80 per cent of the Canadian fish catch.

That is in the process of changing. The American 200-mile-zone has for the first time awakened the American government's interest in the fishery, and chances are that it will more and more be supplying its own markets.If that happens, and the European market is not there to pick up the slack, the result would be simply another old-style round of recession on the coast: a fish glut, no markets and crumbling prices.

Them that has, gets

Thus, in the final analysis, European interests—with Canadian corporations, Reid and Carter in tow—hold most of the trump cards. There is one of the great laws of capitalism and commissar-communism alike at work here: them that has, gets.

The chances are now that Canada, having considered the fishery a sub-human activity since day one, will pay for having fallen behind by remaining behind.

Many of these pitfalls can be avoided, of course, assuming that Ottawa is interested. For despite Romeo LeBlanc's stance as the Fisherman's Friend, the problem is as much with Ottawa's attitude as with the provinces'.

Ottawa's hope all along has been that with the 200-mile limit, plus a couple of hundred million dollars in temporary subsidies, the fishery can be safely forgotten and left to its own devices again. Bureaucrats in Tunney's Pasture, it is safe to say, do not particularly like fish.

A Canadian deep-sea fleet must be developed, but a) - if it is to be paid for in public funds, it must be publicly owned; and b) - it must not conflict with the needs of the inshore fishery - (a 50-mile limit or variable equivalent is also needed). The dangers of losing the European market on the short term could be compensated for if Ottawa was interested in agressive marketing. Romeo LeBlanc himself—one of the more competent ministers in the Trudeau cabinet—probably is. But one thing that few people on the East Coast tend to forget is that the fisheries department is just one desk in the corner at Environment Canada. Fisheries, like Regional Economic Expansion, is not part of "national" policy, but rather an aberration brought about by circumstances which do not fit into the priorities of the centre of the country.

As such, Reid and Carter are justified in not trusting Ottawa to develop the fishery and insisting on doing it their own way. The problem is that their way is the way of foreign and monopoly domination. And the fact that this situation of choosing between the lesser of evils exists at all is due exactly to the fact that Ottawa never has been serious about the fishery, except as a temporary problem to be disposed of as quickly as possible.

Ottawa's lack of policy

The last time Ottawa got serious was during the recession years of the 1920's. At that time the fisheries cooperative movement was started with federal support, after a royal commission reported. The co-ops did some good at the local level. But Ottawa, having done its duty, then more or less dropped the whole thing. Now it's the 200-mile limit and some allied administrative programmes which, like the co-ops, will not by themselves make of the fishery what it should be.

If everything goes true to form, Romeo LeBlanc will soon go to his reward in a higher portfolio, the fishery will be left to its own devices and 50 years from now the "problem" will be once again addressed. Meanwhile—as a recent study of the U.S. Commerce Department pointed out—there's going to be a fish protein shortage in the world within ten years, despite possible short-term gluts on existing markets. Fish, far from being that slimy stuff despised of the elect except when properly served up at the Parliamentary Restaurant, is a hot commodity of the future. Potentially it is a national resource, if Ottawa wants it to be. If not, it remains merely a "problem."

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ATLANTIC TEXTILES

National Policy in 1879, the federal government's industrial strategy has been to establish the Canadian position as a branch plant of the U.S. economy. Since American industrial capital was more advanced than Canadian in organizational methods and technique, American interests were able to take advantage of tariff protection and establish subsidiaries in Canada. The passing of the recent Textile and Clothing Board Act has in many ways contributed to this same process.

On the surface, the federal policy since 1971 has attempted to assist the industry by offering effective protection to domestic producers, provided that they moved into lines of production which were not in competition with those goods from low-wage countries. This policy was a response to the cries of the major textile producers to control foreign imports which have increased in both quality and quantity over the last 5 years. In 1970, 10% of Canadian sales of clothing were foreign; in 1976, 17% of all sales were foreign. 13,000 jobs were lost last year alone in the industry. Over the past couple of years, some import controls have been placed on sweaters, hosiery, some yarns, etc.

However, the real effect of this policy has been to enhance the position of the largest companies, who, with the exception of Dominion Textiles, are foreign controlled. In addition, parts of the operations of some of the major textile companies have been moved to third world countries where they can take advantage of wages which are literally one-tenth of the wages of Canadian workers. This will mean a further loss in the number of jobs in the industry.

The textile industry serves as an excellent example of the process of underdevelopment in Atlantic Canada. Both through its own initiative and through a government policy which has aided and abetted it, the textile industry has managed to transfer most of its resources and employment opportunities out of the Maritimes and into regions of Quebec and Ontario. There, it has been able to maintain its position as a low-wage employer in the branch-plant economy, closer to the major American and central Canadian markets. The consolidation of the industry into an increasingly small number of corporations has meant that these companies can put great pressure on the Canadian government and influence the protective tariff structure to their own advantage. While in the future, stiffer controls on imports will certainly raise the price of textiles and clothing for the consumer, they may also create severe problems for the third world countries—some of which are very dependent on textile exports to countries such as ours.

The textile and clothing industry is now worth approximately $6.6 billion. But who profits from this? . . . —Certainly not the Atlantic Provinces, nor the low-paid workers in the textile plants in Quebec—nor those with still lower wages in textile producing countries of the Third World.