

Supply—Fisheries

However all this is not going to do much good unless we can sell the fish we catch. I would appreciate it if before we finish discussion on the fisheries estimates the minister would give an analysis of what is going on in the United States, with particular reference to its relationship to the future of our fishing industry.

Mr. Kirk (Shelburne-Yarmouth-Clare): Mr. Chairman, in view of the discussion that has taken place, and the comments made by so many hon. members, I shall endeavour to make my comments brief. However there are two or three observations I should like to make.

May I say at the outset that a year or so ago the Minister of Fisheries visited the constituency of Shelburne-Yarmouth-Clare; in fact he visited on two different occasions. On each occasion he made an excellent impression, not only on the members of the fishing industry but also upon the fishermen in the boats. He talked with many of them, and they felt that there was at the head of the Department of Fisheries a man who was really interested in their problems. I do feel the excellent presentation he made this afternoon, when he gave a résumé of the work of the department during the last year as well as an outline of future plans for expansion, research, inspection and the like, was such as to make hon. members realize more than ever how fortunate we are that the Minister of Fisheries is a man of the calibre of the present incumbent.

Last year when we were discussing the fisheries estimates those of us from the fishing constituencies were extremely worried about the marketing situation. However we went through that bad period. We know the situation has been getting better, and we know also that right now it is much better than it has been for some considerable time. When I was home at Easter, and on another occasion three weeks before that, I talked with many persons engaged in the fishing industry. They told me that some of the markets were improving, that others had improved a great deal, and that they looked for improvement in other directions. There was an altogether different spirit to that I had noted in the previous year. Those of us from Nova Scotia are particularly pleased that it should be our own Nova Scotian minister (Mr. Winters) who should be heading the delegation to the Mediterranean countries with a view to improving markets in that area.

I was greatly pleased by the description the minister gave of the method of manufacturing fish sticks. I know many people are asking what these fish sticks are. His explanation was clear, brief, and concise,

and I believe it will mean that people throughout Canada who will read about the speech he has made will have a better idea of what this product is, and that it will lead to further sales. It appears to us that the manufacture of fish sticks is going to mean a great deal in increasing the consumption of fish.

I recall that two years ago when speaking in this debate I was very much upset about the loss of fishing gear, particularly boats and lobster traps. I remember that on that occasion members in all parties spoke about the need for some form of insurance or indemnity plan. Last year, when the estimates were discussed just before the close of the session we had very little time to speak about the matter, other than to thank the minister for having introduced the plan. I would like to say that although it was received with some doubt, as is usual in connection with any new plan, I have found upon talking to fishermen in my constituency that more and more are accepting it, and are finding it most helpful. I would appreciate it if, before the discussion is completed, the minister would give us some idea of the number of fishermen who have applied for coverage, and those who have applied for an indemnity because of losses they have suffered. I believe that in a free enterprise economy the setting up of some sort of indemnity plan is by far the best procedure. I do know that many fishermen in my area are pleased with it, and I am sure that as time goes on we will find most of them will seek this form of coverage.

I speak of the insurance plan particularly as it covers boats and lobster traps. I would ask the minister if at a later time he would give us some idea of the success of the new metal lobster traps. I know that in the first instance there were fishermen who felt that lobsters would not enter a trap unless it was made of laths. I am now given to understand that the lobster is not so particular, and that he will enter a metal trap if it is the right shape and the right size, provided it contains the necessary bait. I know experiments have been carried on, and I would appreciate his telling the committee as to their success or otherwise, and whether the cost can be brought down to a point where metal traps would compete with traps made of laths.

I mention problems concerning lobsters particularly because the constituency of Shelburne-Yarmouth-Clare, which I have the honour to represent, is the constituency which does an exceptionally large lobster business. In fact, it is in that constituency in the course of a year, during those months of the lobster season from December 1 to May 31, that about 10 million pounds of lobsters