

THE SENATE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

EVIDENCE

Ottawa, Tuesday, December 12, 1967

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources, to which was referred Bill S-27, an Act to amend the Fish Inspection Act, met this day at 9.40 a.m. to give consideration to the bill.

Senator Cyrille Vaillancourt (Chairman) in the Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable senators, shall we proceed?

Hon. Senators: Yes.

The Chairman:

The committee agreed that a verbatim report be made of the committee's proceedings on the bill.

The committee agreed to report, recommending authority be granted for the printing of 800 copies in English and 300 copies in French of the committee's proceedings on the bill.

The witnesses from the department are: Mr. H. V. Dempsey, Director, Inspection Service; and Mr. J. G. Carton, departmental solicitor.

Mr. Carton, the departmental solicitor, will explain the bill to us.

Mr. J. G. Carton, Departmental Solicitor, Department of Fisheries: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, this bill, as you can see, is relatively short, consisting of three amendments.

The first is the definition of "container." The background of this amendment is to bring this definition of "container" into line with the definition which has been internationally accepted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, with particular reference to adding to the definition this phrase "wrapper or confining band." In our own case this has practical significance, because there are at least two types of fish marketed and exported and moved in Canada in this way. One is blocks of heavy salt cod, and the other is

Pacific halibut. This definition was finally approved at a meeting held in Ottawa in June last at which 22 countries were represented. So, this has been approved by the Committee on Standards of that commission.

The second is "processing," and is precisely what was in the act up until now, with one important addition. We have added the word "canning" to make it absolutely certain that it is included. It could have been argued the way it read before it was included, but I do not believe it was the intention of Parliament to include it when the act was first passed and, certainly, an important function like canning requires mentioning specifically to make sure that it is included.

The third one is perhaps very important from our point of view, and that is the adding of a provision to define the words "tainted, decomposed or unwholesome." These words occur in the revised section 10 of the act which we are putting in. They are to facilitate the quality control of fish. We have found, through experience over the years, that the phrase which exists at present "wholesome and fit for human food" is almost impossible to enforce. It is true that even this definition is going to contain a certain objective element in it. For example, with regard to the phrase "fit for human food," I recall one instance some years ago, I believe in Saint John, New Brunswick, where the subject matter of an inspection was barrels of pickled alewives consigned to Haiti. Our inspector quite properly, I thought and as it turned out, rejected them on the basis that we have this phrase in our regulations "not fit for human food." The packer objected to this ruling, and his final proof that they were fit for human food was simply to take one out of the barrels and eat it right in front of the inspector. This can happen. It is not to be implied because they can still be eaten they are quality-controlled and that their export would do nothing but do Canada's exports any good.