

MR. HALFYARD DISCUSSES THE VEXED QUESTION OF THE PRICE OF FISH!

Shows the Big Part Played by the F.P.U. in Causing a Rise.

AGRICULTURE POLICY A Delusion, a Sham, a Snare, and a Means of Waste.

Mr. Speaker, I crave the attention of the House for a little while. I first wish to congratulate the last speaker, Mr. Hickman, upon his splendid address. Only that he would be such a loss to our side of the House, we would gladly give him to the Government for a Minister of Agriculture and Mines. I am sure that the suggestions which he has offered are practical and show that he has studied the question minutely and would be an acquisition to any department.

My object in rising, Mr. Speaker, is to support the amendment. We are in a very ambiguous position just now. I think it is imposing upon good nature that we should have to ask the Prime Minister for replies to our various questions concerning matters appertaining to these Departments. Our constituents are continually asking us to enquire into various public matters. They want everything ventilated, and it is our duty to get them the information that they want.

Their Business

As has been said by the learned member for Trinity, we are here to criticize because the mouths of the Government members are sealed, and they have to do what the Prime Minister and his Executive want them to do; and therefore if there is to be any debate at all, we must do something on this side of the House. Of course, if they think they are beyond criticism, well, then, all I have to say to them is that they should take unto themselves wings and fly away from this mundane sphere altogether.

It has been stated here that Mr. Coaker did not have anything to do with raising the price of fish. I contend that Mr. Coaker, as head of the Fishermen's Protective Union, has had a great deal to do with the raising of the price of fish. The hon. member for Bay de Verde might have elaborated his statement and opened the eyes of the House in connection with this matter.

I was surprised to find that the Minister of Finance and Customs did not know in what condition our fish is sold in the American markets. I had thought to come here and learn something, but I find now that the members on this side of the House have to throw out practical hints for the benefit of the different heads of the Departments.

Questioners

We are here, Mr. Speaker, to ask questions. You cannot expect new members just coming into the House to know much about the public accounts. Our constituents want the information, and that is the reason why we ask questions. There is a time in the history of every country, whether the commercial or political history, when questions must be asked.

and now that we find a depleted treasury in this country we want to know the cause.

We were told by the Minister of Finance and Customs that we had no money; that every cent borrowed for the purpose of building railways was spent; and still a little later he told us that he could go and draw a cheque for any amount that might be required for any purpose.

Now, if I were to stand up here this evening and say nothing but pleasant things to the Government, I would be a very nice fellow, but the physician who only prescribes pleasing doses, and the lawyer who keeps the true condition of things from his clients, deserves neither confidence nor respect. And we are here to investigate the true condition of things. The country at the present time is in a hole, and it has been brought there by the blundering tactics of men who will do anything to retain possession of the emoluments of office which they now possess.

Pleased

I was very pleased with the remarks of my hon. friend, Mr. Moulton. He said amongst other things that if we found out that this agricultural policy which we have is no good, that we have not entered into any contract with respect to it, such as we have with the Reids, and that we can withdraw the grant. Well, it has been proven to him that this agricultural policy is of very little good.

The hon. member for Placentia and St. Mary's, Mr. Devereux, and also Mr. Downey, read some extracts from a report which I happened to make in 1911, but they did not read the whole of it. I contend, Mr. Speaker, that the agricultural industry of this country is next to the fishing industry, and that if we find that the money allocated for this purpose is not spent wisely and that the country is not getting returns commensurate with the expenditure made, that we should turn right-about face and try to attain the object which we have in view in some other way.

Where Fault Lies

I don't find fault with the Government for allocating \$40,000 a year for agriculture, but I do find fault with them for the way in which it is expended.

Mr. Speaker, the great question at present, as far as I can see is "Who raised the price of fish?" The hon. member for Bay de Verde, Mr. Hickman, in his remarks yesterday said that the Government of this Colony had no more to do with raising the price of fish than the President of the Chinese Republic. So that much is settled, because we are told that Mr. Hickman endorsed the Government's policy.

If Mr. Hickman, in his remarks yesterday, endorsed the Government's policy, the only policy they can have at present is that the price of fish wholly and solely depends upon the law of supply and demand. That satisfies the Government in every particular.

Matters of Moment

Now, Mr. Speaker, the matter that should engage our attention in this

House this session should not be the mere bandying of words from one side to the other, but we are here to debate matters affecting the interest of the country.

Now if the Government is so perfect that they need no criticism, let them get down to work and bring their measures before the House and have done with them so that those who are here from the outports can go home.

I look upon the matter of occupying a seat in this House as no child's play, because there are most serious matters to be dealt with in this Legislature, matters affecting the interests of this country which should be dealt with at the present time.

Not Pleasant

I take no pleasure in sitting here and criticizing the actions of the Gov-

ernment to a large extent. But even in these markets local arrangements and local organizations might have something to do with the price obtained by our fish merchants.

Local Conditions

But here you are winking out of sight local conditions, and the prices obtained by the men who catch the fish. That is the point we are most interested in. We know what the fishermen think about these matters, we are here representing them, and we know what is the opinion of the fishermen as to the work that has been done for them by the Fishermen's Union.

We know that here the very name of the Fishermen's Union is treated with scorn and contempt. Why is this so if the Fishermen's Union is no good, or if it is harmless?

I cannot wonder that men who by accident of birth have all they wish, and who are out of touch with our laboring classes should be opposed in some way to an organization of fishermen or a union of working men; but I do wonder at certain individuals who, as soon as they have obtained money and position, forget the pit from whence they were dug, and who treat with scorn and ridicule an attempt by our fishermen and workmen to improve their condition.

Were Not Treated Fair

Everyone knows that in days gone by the working classes have not had their rights, and men who are leaders of the Government have spoken of this matter, even though it might have only been before an election and was promptly forgotten afterwards; but

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ernment in connection with the Agricultural Policy.

The people who sent me here did not send me here simply for that purpose and that alone; but realizing that that policy of the Government is not all that is commendable I would be lacking in my duty to my constituents if I did not to the best of my ability, though my efforts may be very weak, and perhaps, in the opinion of the House, fruitless, criticize what I conceived to be the faults of that policy.

But I digress. I was speaking of the rise in the price of fish and what caused it.

I do not think anyone in this country will take to himself the credit of the price our fish may obtain in the foreign markets. When we speak of the law of supply and demand governing the price of fish, we are speaking only of the foreign markets, and in these markets that certainly applies

Why are the great interests opposed to us, and why are so many of the great firms on Water Street opposed to us if we have nothing to do with what they will have to pay for a quintal of fish?

Now, I only speak in this particular to disabuse the minds of hon. members opposite.

Know the Difference

Our people know the difference. We have been told, and I think it is a true statement, that anything anybody else does will be treated with envy and jealousy if we believe that we cannot do the same thing equally as well.

Now we know that Mr. Coaker, President of the F.P.U., is treated with envy and suspicion. Why is this? It is because the fishermen believe that he has done something that no other man in this country ever did. They have a faith in him that they have never had in any other man.

this we know that the fishermen did not get their rights.

Now that they are organized and are looking for their rights in a law-abiding manner, they are abused in every way. They are called fools and illiterates. I would like a man to go to the Districts of Bonavista or Fogo and make these remarks.

Has the F.P.U. nothing to do with the price of fish? Go ask the men of Placentia and St. Mary's. Ask the men in the North or in the West. Men from Placentia and St. Mary's have come into our office on Water Street and said we would be ingrates and unworthy the name of men if we did not come and express a word of appreciation of the benefits we have received from reading the "Fishermen's Advocate."

The Proof

Last year we watched its columns and were told to hold our fish for (Continued on page 5.)



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