

Saltfish Act

detail of his expectations for the Saltfish Corporation and its market.

I hope that some of the money being sought will be used to increase the research done by the corporation into the kind of product it can sell. This is an important matter, particularly when other nations are increasing their capacity as well. Others have a 200-mile limit and can manage their fishery just as well as we can manage ours. They will be looking for similar markets for their product.

Another place where the minister might give some direction is in regard to processing techniques and improvements in saltfish preparation to meet market demands. The \$30 million is to be spent on improved means of preparation of the product. I hope that drying facilities will be provided by the corporation to companies in coastal communities in order to maintain employment in the onshore fishery that is so dependent on saltfish.

I should like to congratulate a former minister, the Hon. Jack Davis, who set up the Saltfish Corporation in 1970. It helped preserve those coastal communities at a time when private companies were finding that they could get a better price for fresh cod than for saltfish and so were decreasing its production. Indeed, I think the establishment of the Saltfish Corporation has justified its existence. We are now getting to the point where the Saltfish Corporation is getting some of the same benefits as some of the private companies in increased stocks, and hopefully an increased size of stock.

● (1600)

This brings me to a point that I would like the minister to explain; perhaps he will when we get into Committee of the Whole. It concerns the process by which we will improve the quality of the stock and the product that we sell in the United States market, in southern Europe and possibly in southern Brazil. The interdepartmental report filed in May, 1979, indicated that one of the concerns of the corporation and of the department was the small size of the cod that we are catching in Canada and the need to get a larger cod for a better product. The suggestion was made that perhaps we will have to diversify our present fishery. Rather than concentrating on the fresh frozen market of the United States particularly, as the major companies have, we should seek diversified markets. This party wholeheartedly supports that concept. We can no longer continually depend on a major market in the United States, a market that is attempting to meet its requirements from its own fishermen. By getting into the saltfish business and seeking different markets, we can agree and certainly support that concept. I would have liked the minister to explain how we are going to get a larger cod for the saltfish market.

The report suggests there is a possibility that the offshore fleet can perhaps provide some of the largest stock for the Saltfish Corporation and the agents of that corporation. I would have liked the minister to explain how he perceives that coming about.

The former minister who spoke recently indicated in a press release in *The Globe and Mail* in November last year that there may be an opportunity for the private companies, because of the expanding interest in saltfish, to get back to the saltfish business. I would like the present minister to comment on how he perceives the private companies and the larger corporations now coming back into saltfish marketing either through the corporation or in competition with that corporation, after having abandoned the Newfoundland and Quebec fishermen a number of years ago for higher profits in another field. Are we going to allow private companies in Quebec and Newfoundland to come into competition with the Saltfish Corporation and possibly reduce its effectiveness in terms of marketing that product on world markets? Perhaps we can ask the minister in committee if that is a possibility.

As I see it, the important thing for the minister, his department and the Saltfish Corporation is to meet growing demands. The minister made it sound as though our markets are rapidly expanding. Certainly the Puerto Rico market is the major Saltfish Corporation market. There are two countries that bought a great deal of saltfish from Canada in 1978, yet from the annual reports of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation they show a disturbing reduction in the amount of product those countries purchased in 1979. I am referring to Jamaica and Trinidad. In 1978 Jamaica purchased 3,826,000 pounds of saltfish from the corporation. In 1979 it purchased one million pounds. In 1978 Trinidad purchased over two million pounds of saltfish from the corporation and in 1979 it purchased only 1.4 million pounds. Trinidad's reduction in purchases is not of the same magnitude as that of Jamaica's, but it is still a significant reduction in the market at that level. The annual report does not indicate why there was any reduction of purchases by Jamaica or Trinidad. It would be interesting for us to find out if it is a matter of quality of product, a pricing problem, tariffs that have been imposed, or what the conditions are that are reducing exports to those two countries.

Between 1978 and 1979 total shipments were reduced from 20 million pounds to 18 million pounds. Again, this indicates that the Saltfish Corporation is not expanding its market as we may have wished and may have been led to believe by the minister's comments. It is a disturbing reduction in the total exports. We will, of course, be interested to find out what 1980 brings to the Saltfish Corporation.

While fishermen are getting better prices for their product, we do not seem to be expanding the amount of product that we are selling, at least in terms of tonnage. This is certainly true domestically and in the export field.

We support the Saltfish Corporation and we support the bill before us today which will allow the Saltfish Corporation to expand to meet the needs of fishermen and processors in the industry. We hope that the Saltfish Corporation will be able to develop a marketing strategy that will enable it to compete on the world market with other nations who will be looking for the same markets as Canada.

The \$30 million should be enough to assure fishermen an adequate income and as well be enough to ensure that we do