

*Inspection of Canned Salmon*

threatened because of the lack of excellence in the pack. During the past three years a very close study was made of the problem and an inspection system was perfected last year. This system is not considered to be the final word but it was certainly the result of a very careful study by all concerned, and of a genuine effort to meet an exceedingly difficult problem with which we were confronted, that of inspecting, without too much cost, this very important problem.

My hon. friend himself admitted, after outlining to the house what he considered would be a satisfactory system of inspection, that it would be too costly to place an inspector to inspect every fish as it went through the various processes of packing, and so it was decided to appoint a board of inspectors and to stipulate that before the goods were approved they should receive a certificate from that board. The hon. member was good enough to pay a high compliment to these inspectors. He said that they were capable men, honourable men and good men. I do not think he would dare say otherwise. They were chosen by the trade in conjunction with the officers of the Fisheries department, and I think they are making a genuine effort to maintain the standard of excellence we have achieved and which we hope to preserve.

In any matter of this kind there are bound to be difficulties. I fear I shall have to ask the house to permit me to go back very briefly and refer to what has already been mentioned by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Neill)—some of the earlier history of the canning business. I do so merely for the purpose of making clear the point under discussion. Twenty, twenty-five or thirty years ago it was the custom in this country to issue a licence to the cannery and to allocate to that cannery a specific area which was to be in water contiguous to it, and all fish in that area had to be carried to that particular cannery. That worked quite satisfactorily for a great many years, as the hon. member himself has admitted, but certain abuses crept in, one of them being a tendency on the part of the owner of the cannery to retain complete control of fishing gear and so on. The federal government in those days issued what was known as a boat rating, allocating to each cannery thirty or forty boats according to its capacity. Each boat was licensed, the licence was held by the cannery, and the cannery would permit a certain crew to take boats out and fish, the fish being delivered to the cannery. Long before my hon. friend came into the house, I had taken the opportunity to point out some of the abuses which accompanied that sys-

[Mr. Stevens.]

tem, and I was quite pleased to endorse fully the action of Mr. Ballantyne, when he was Minister of Marine twelve or fourteen years ago, in changing the system. During the past few years however the whole coast has been open; that is to say, fish might be caught near Prince Rupert and carried five hundred miles down the coast and canned in a cannery on the Fraser river or at Vancouver.

Obviously it is not good business to carry fresh fish such long distances, and in many instances by the time the collecting boats had collected the fish and carried it four or five hundred miles down the coast to the canneries at Vancouver or thereabouts, as great a period as forty-eight hours and sometimes sixty hours would elapse, and more than that indeed. Now I say it is obvious that the more quickly fish can be canned the better the quality of the output; and generally speaking our competitors on the other side of the Pacific, the Japanese and the Russians, and also the Americans in Alaskan waters, catch their fish and take it to canneries located within a comparatively short distance of the place where it is caught. So that their fish is fresh and firm and the colour is not impaired. On the other hand, a fish might be carried for two or three days and still might not be too bad. It might not be bad in the sense of being spoiled, but it would not be what we call prime product.

During the last year or so there has grown up a new practice and it is this. Individuals would have boats of a certain capacity, gas boats. I do not mean the small fishing boat but something of the tug type—my hon. friend from Antigonish-Guysborough (Mr. Duff) could give a better description of it than I can. The type of boat I am speaking about is a power boat with capacity for carrying the catch of a score or more of fishing boats, and it would go up the coast and collect from this and that fisherman throughout the fishing grounds, dumping these catches into the hold and carrying the fish hundreds of miles down to the cannery or selling it to some cannery in the neighbourhood. It may be asked, what is wrong with that? Well, there was certainly this wrong with it, that it imperilled the excellence of the catch; and I submit to the house this point at least, that whatever else this or any other government does in connection with our fisheries or in connection with our products generally, if we have any control at all we ought to see that the product is placed on the market in as prime a condition as it is possible to have it, and anything that detracts from such excellence must command and challenge the attention of this house.