

Supply—Fisheries

fishermen in the Atlantic provinces will share fully in the greatly augmented prosperity of that region presaged for the Atlantic provinces in Conservative legislation during the present session of the house.

I think we have to meet these remarks head-on, and as a private backbencher on this side of this house I accept the challenge that a diversion of trade would ruin the fishing industry, a diversion of trade from complete reliance upon the United States to a lesser reliance. A diversion to the United Kingdom and other overseas markets will be beneficial to the Atlantic provinces and in that benefiting the fishing community will share. We do not seek to separate them from the rest of the maritime society.

Is it true to say that things were always so bad in the fishing industry in the 1930 era as we would be led to believe? Last night the hon. member for Charlotte mentioned 1930—they always do—but he did not tell us that between 1930 and 1936, despite an adverse United States tariff, there was rapid growth in the development of an important market for Nova Scotia fish in the middle west of the United States. I do not say an adverse tariff is a good thing at all, but the other economic factors survived it and overcame it and the market expanded in that area. It expanded despite this adverse United States tariff.

Mr. MacEachen: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Morris: Yes.

Mr. MacEachen: Would the hon. member care to tell the committee the decrease in the value of the fisheries production in the province of Nova Scotia during the years to which he has referred?

Mr. Morris: I do not have those figures but I am delighted that the hon. member took the bait. I want to quote a passage to him from the report of the Gordon economic commission, and this is your government's idea of the economic prospects of Canada, not ours.

Mr. MacEachen: I am asking for the figures of fish production during the years to which the hon. member has referred, particularly in eastern Nova Scotia?

Mr. Morris: I am going to give you the answer—

Mr. MacEachen: There was an unparalleled decline in fish production.

Mr. Morris:—if you will restrain yourself long enough to take your seat. I should like to quote from the Gordon economic commission report on the commercial fisheries

of Canada. Last night the minister recommended that hon. members read it but apparently the hon. member has not taken that advice. In the report I find the following:

The Canadian Atlantic fishing industry lagged in development on the basis of the innovations just described.

These were filleting at the source of production and quick freezing.

This may be attributed to several causes: (a) the lack of a mass market close at hand, (b) the conservatism of the business community involved and the scarcity of venture capital for investment in the industry, and (c) political opposition to modernization . . .

Nevertheless, especially in Nova Scotia, some progress was made. In that province, the development of the fresh fish trade in the inter-war period fell into two phases. In the first, up to about 1930, it depended almost solely on expansion of sales in central Canada; in the second, aided by favourable rates on the Canadian railways, an important market was opened up in the middle west of the United States. In the latter phase, growth was more rapid, despite the adverse United States tariff between 1930 and 1936.

What in fact has been the practice in the fishing industry on the Atlantic coast in the last 20 years? The policy of the late administration was to enshrine decadence in our fishing communities and describe it on post-cards as picturesque. It was the suppression of dissent with the stock reply that it would take time to repair the fishing industry. Take time indeed! It certainly will take time now after years of neglect. The late government did not take time to repair it. It impinged upon eternity. Under the laws of chance that policy might, given an eternity of government, by trial and error have hit upon a solution. But, Mr. Chairman, so might a monkey if you trained it how to punch the keys of a typewriter ultimately produce a play by Shakespeare.

Next week there is a Liberal convention and no doubt we will get the same pious platitudes on the fisheries. In the 1919 Liberal convention resolutions fisheries received five words, "Net, twine and fishermen's equipment." The idea was to lower the tariff. In 1948 another leader was chosen and we got this resolution:

The Liberal party will support the institution of new programs designed to widen the domestic and foreign markets for fish . . . low cost fishing equipment, establishment of adequate landing facilities, of safe anchorages, adequate aids to navigation and encouragement of improved fishing practices.

Mr. McIvor: Hear, hear.

Mr. Morris: Hear, hear is right. Let us check out this resolution.

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the hon. member permit a question?