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A Fallen Idol.

Fishermen Spurn Mr. Coaker--His Meeting Last Night a Failure--The "Underdogs" Not Given a Hearing.

The meeting held last night by Hon. Mr. Coaker to explain his Fish Regulations was fairly well attended but not by one half did as many turn up as on the previous night at the Fishermen's meeting. Mr. Coaker's meeting was held in the C.C.C. Hall and opened at 7.30 Hon. W. W. Halfyard acting as Chairman. The principal speaker was Mr. Coaker and he received a fair hearing though at times he was heckled. The majority of fishermen present were anxious to know what he was going to do about their unsold fish, so they listened attentively, but with disappointment, as was later shown when the meeting had to close down. Mr. Halfyard proved himself an able Chairman and on many occasions used his eloquence and diplomacy to quell the unrest which was all too evident. His prudent judgment in closing the meeting abruptly, probably averted serious trouble. No attempt was made or invitation given the fishermen to express their views and this they resented. After the meeting was abruptly closed a number of fishermen going how they had been bluffed, jumped to the platform and began speaking. One of the men challenged Mr. Coaker and the other Government members present (they had just stepped off the platform) to get up and answer their questions. Dr. Campbell, seeing trouble brewing took Mr. Coaker by the arm, and with Mr. Penney following, they made a hurried exit, and immediately drove from the place. Special police guards were stationed at the Hall during the night and these had to be called on many times to keep order. Only for their protection it is doubtful if Mr. Coaker and the other three Government men would have escaped without injury.

Mr. Halfyard Opens.

Mr. Halfyard in his opening remarks said, that conditions here are similar the wide world over. High prices for everything we have to buy and low prices for everything we have to sell. As we all here are interested in fishing matters, I won't detain you but will call on the Hon. Mr. Coaker, who is Minister of Marine and Fisheries and for the past few months acting Prime Minister. He is a big man politically and is here to explain conditions as they exist.

Hon. W. F. Coaker Explains.

Hon. W. F. Coaker.—Following the remarks made by the Chairman, I am glad to see so many fishermen present at this meeting and I hope you will listen to every word I say and try to

carry away the facts I give you. Living in a time when every man should do his best, he should keep cool. Conditions in Newfoundland are very bad. I am in touch with the markets and I am in the secrets of the Government and I say this is no time for making light of matters. Last year we had a game of politics and the people decided, and I hope it will be 3 years before they will decide again. In my opinion there is no possibility of another General Election till the term of the present Government expires. The beginning of our troubles in Italy was the establishment of the Consorzio. This is run by one Ragnoli, we must sell through him and him only. (Voice in audience—"What about Hawes?") Norway and Iceland have combined against the Consorzio as we have done. The exporters of fish seeing that they could not do business with the Consorzio, asked us to send Mr. Hawes. We sent him but he did not succeed in making sales. He is there now and when he and Hon. Mr. Squires attended a five hours session of the Consorzio, Mr. Ragnoli showed them a copy of the Daily News dated Sept. 23rd and said we won't buy now. Ragnoli's idea is to get fish at his price, but we want enough for our fish to give the fisherman a living wage. (Fishermen—"We are not getting it now.")

(Mr. Coaker—"Don't interrupt me I am here to give you information.") Fishermen—Will you buy our fish? After restoring order Mr. Coaker continued. Mr. Hawes, I am told, is not liked in Italy. Well the reason is because Mr. Hawes is a hard man. If any man could come and say to me I can sell 100,000 qts. of fish to Italy, I would be only too glad. If you men think the regulations should be given up, let the Italians give up the Consorzio. When we put our regulations in force in Greece the Greeks bought our fish readily and we would be selling more if people would stop saying the price is going down. They want lots of fish in Greece, but they are waiting for the price to drop. They had a big crop of olives, and with plenty of oil they use lots of fish. Mr. Coaker then explained to the audience the workings of a large board with pegs, which represented fish carriers. (A voice was here heard saying, "It is your move next, Mr. Coaker.") All the owners of which would break if the regulations were lifted. The same conditions as these exist every year regarding the export of our fish. Anyhow why has cod oil

gone down? It is because there is no regulations or artificial props to keep it up. If the regulations are removed an awful condition will exist, and I don't know where they will end. Many firms here now have to be nursed. There is no man prevented from shipping fish in St. John's. We only advised shippers not to charter vessels until the congestion, I have shown you on the board, is relieved. All this stuff you are told about people not being allowed to ship is nonsense. (Shouts—"Put him out!" and "let him stay!")

The meeting became disorderly at this point and the speaker became angry and changed his measured words to a mad rush, during which he said something about preaching blue ruin, and his enemies. Dr. Campbell, who was on the platform, began to get uneasy and thought something serious was up, but Mr. Halfyard reassured him that all would be well. Cooing somewhat Mr. Coaker referred to the delegation of fishermen which waited on him in the morning with a set of resolutions. He told them that he would give them \$8 for their fish, but if they removed the regulations they would only get \$5. Twelve months ago, said the speaker, I saw this cloud coming and there would be hard times for Newfoundland. My experience is that the men who handle the business of the country will one day make a promise and the next day break it. (Applause.) I know a merchant who last year lost \$120,000 on a cargo of fish to Brazil, but this year since the regulations the shippers have not lost one cent. (Shouts—"No, but the fishermen did.") My opponents say I have a better chance to make money in the fish business than they. This is not true. The smallest man can start in the fish business if he chooses. The Spaniards were not stopped from exporting fish if they pay their license. They have as much right to do so as I have. Do you think that with my knowledge I should give into a few men who have a political card to play. With all my knowledge do you think I should budge? If I did you would curse me. It is impossible for Editors to know this business. They would not understand what is on this board. I have the facts, I have the knowledge, and I am not going to give in.

Here another spasm came on and something incoherent was said about plots hatched 30 years ago, and getting \$9 for fish, and the regulations. Becoming calmer the speaker continued, get a petition with 1,500 names from Bonavista Bay signed to it saying they don't want me and I won't stay in the Government. Morine can have my job. I am slaving from Monday to Sunday and is that worth living for? Anyone can have my job if they can do it better. Give me the petition with 1,500 names and I will give up the job, but I will give you a warning, men, do a lot of thinking. I am going to attend the Convention next week and then let these men judge me. I have any trouble about your fish come to me and I will get you \$3.00, but not \$9.

This ended Mr. Coaker's explanation of the regulations and what the fishermen were going to do with their ship Labrador.

The Man from Norway.

Mr. Penney, who was the next speaker, thought to get funny at the opening of his speech but he quickly realized that the fishermen were in no mood to joke with. They had heard the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, but he told them nothing concerning their fish which they could not dispose of. The talk of getting \$9 for Labrador fish was not what was wanted. The fishermen had white nape Labrador and heavy salted shore cured Newfoundland fish made according to the regulations, but Mr. Coaker did not refer to this at all, so Mr. Penney was told to give them something of more vital interest. In his opening remarks Mr. Penney said: Men, you may say, you Penney, had a jolly time at our expense (hear! hear!) I stayed at the best hotels, and all through my travels I had the best that could be had. It was the first time a fisherman had a good picnic at the Government expense. (The audience here began to clamor, and shout, "You were spending our blood and sweat.") Mr. Coaker got uneasy and the chairman had to call order a dozen times. He threatened to close the meeting and the police had to be called in.) Continuing, Mr. Penney described his trip abroad. Some one asked "What did you bring back? Was it Sugar?" Another voice: "Did you see Mr. Coaker's dog Muttie on your travels?" A member of the Daily Star staff began shouting, and his voice was heard amongst the din saying, "Never mind, Mr. Penney, go on." He continued, but in another strain, saying, a friend of mine belonging to my native town, blackguarded me while I was away; I am prepared to meet that man any day. Men, we must have regulations as regards cure of fish. In Norway it is treated as an article of food. Everyone in the House of Assembly voted for the regulations. Now, while cheap Norwegian fish was being sold in the markets, what would have happened if fish had to go on as before? (Voice in the audience: "I was promised \$10 for fish; did I get it? Not yet.") The chairman: "We must have order, or I will have to close the meeting." Mr. Penney, continuing: When I read articles in the

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local papers I thought there must be a crisis on here, but now when I remember what I saw on the other side, I think we are living in a Paradise. (Various voices: You, perhaps are, we are not, we can't get sale for our fish.") After order was again restored, Mr. Penney went on to say, that we are now up against something and we must make up our minds to overcome it; we must pull together with a long pull and a strong pull. (Voice in the audience: You can't pull us.") One fisherman, becoming impatient, rose to his feet and said, "I have 800 qts. of fish here; what am I going to do with it?" Other voices, "Give us order, like we had last night." Again the shouting continued: "We are the poor beggars that paid for your picnic." Mr. Penney, yes, I was over to Norway, but I won't tell you much about it. While I was in Grimby I saw more fish handled in a day than is handled on the whole Labrador in a year. Talk about white napes, all the fish in Norway is made white nape, everything is washed off the fish.

A fisherman: "How much fish did you catch over there?"

Mr. Penney: "Probably more than you ever did."

Fisherman: "Get out; I caught fish while you were sleeping."

Mr. Penney could stand the strain no longer and sat down.

The "Model Farmer."

Dr. Campbell next took the floor, and in a very loud voice told the men present how good Mr. Coaker was, that if he liked he could sit down in his office smoking cigars and fanning himself. He told the men that Mr. Coaker had to work hard to keep up the product of their toil, and that he had the advice of advisory boards, business men, and the Government to guide him. What are the organs of the Opposition doing to-day, said the Doctor. They are trying to ruin the country, talking blue ruin. He was sorry to say that there were men in the city to-day who would ruin it and the country and even they would ask the help of the devil himself if they could ruin us. See if our enemies will buy your fish at \$9. (Voice in the audience: "You and Coaker and the bunch, promised us \$10 and more.") Dr. Campbell: This pouring out tales of blue ruin is killing us. These people are not patriotic; we are not asking for quarter. (Voice (Continued on page 11.)

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