# Read Mr. Gosling's Warning

## Coaker Announces a New Form of Fishery Regulations--The Coaker Menace Fully Exposed--Can Newfoundland Stand Another Reign of Terror?

From the Advocate, November 14th, 1922.

**"We will win because we stand for COMPULSORY control of Codfish exports."**

From the Advocate, November 24th, 1923.
This is taken from the report of the F.P.U. Convention:

**"Mr. Coaker intends to make Compulsory Control an issue, and he will have a mandate from the people."**

**Mr. Coaker's Speech taken from the Official Debates in the House of Assembly, 1922:**

**"The position that I occupy in the Government is an important one and a strong one. When I propose regulations and the Government is not prepared to accept them, then I walk out of the Government. I AM NOT GOING TO ALLOW ANY ONE TO DICTATE TO ME what my duties are, and WHEN I MAKE UP MY MIND TO MAKE REGULATIONS governing the price of fish, I INTEND TO PUT THEM THROUGH."**

**There can be no mistaking the fact but that Squires and Coaker, if returned to power, will endeavour to force upon us the NATIONALIZATION OF FISH. Coaker himself is "hipped" on the control of fish, and he is bound to carry out his pledge to the Union of which he is head. Mr. Coaker's determination in this respect has already cost this Colony millions of dollars' loss.**

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH and his spiteful conduct that drove the first wedge of depression and despair into the prosperous days that once were ours!

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH that caused the crumbling of the time-honored business institutions of St. John's and throughout the Colony.

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH and Coaker's spleen that beggared the WEST COAST Districts.

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH and Coaker's personal hatred of St. John's that drove many of our principal business men in Conception Bay into bankruptcy.

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH that set St. John's back to the days of the Bank Crash.

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH that applied the whip wherewith thousands of our people were forced to pack up their belongings and flee the country with their families to start life anew.

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH that drove the mechanics from their workshops and the labourers from their daily employment to work for a miserable wage in the rock-sheds.

IT WAS COAKER'S CONTROL OF OUR CODFISH that prevented the War Veteran from receiving his just demands from the country, even though Squires said "What do the soldiers want? Weren't they paid to fight?"

**FIRST, LAST, AND ALWAYS, it was Coaker's control of our codfish THAT BROUGHT THIS LITTLE COUNTRY OF OURS TO THE STATE IN WHICH IT IS TO-DAY.**

Now read Mr. Gosling's criticism of Coaker's crazy scheme for the NATIONALIZATION OF CODFISH. There is hardly need to mention that Mr. Gosling is one of our most public spirited citizens. He is further a director of Harvey & Co., Ltd., the biggest provision merchants in the country, who are also agents for several steamship lines employing labour continually, and who further are large exporters of the fishery produce of this country. In addition to being Mayor of St. John's for a number of years, Mr. Gosling has ever been foremost in movements that tend for the betterment and welfare of Newfoundland, and is considered the most astute student of economics we have in the country to-day. He has never been known as a partizan politician, and his strictures on the Nationalization scheme of Mr. W. F. Coaker have therefore the greater strength. Here is his article to the Press:—

**WHAT MR. GOSLING SAYS.**

"Mr. Coaker says he intends to ask for a mandate from the people for the **"Compulsory Control of Codfish."** He means of course the control of the price of dried codfish, but let me tell him that he may just as well ask for the compulsory control of the live codfish swimming in the sea—neither the one nor the other are controllable by regulation. If it were possible for any producer of seller to control the price of his product, would the price of any article ever fall? If we had the power, we would control the price of codfish ever upwards; the farmer would be equally able to control upwards the price of his wheat, butter, sugar, tobacco, tea, etc; the manufacturer and the miner and lumberman would claim equal privileges, and in the end would anybody be better off

THE PREACHING OF SUCH ECONOMIC FOLLY IS MOST HARMFUL, AS IT PREVENTS PEOPLE FROM SEEING THEIR TRUE POSITION, AND FROM ADOPTING THOSE MEASURES WHICH ALONE CAN LEAD THEM TO PROSPERITY.

If we examine Mr. Coaker's scheme in detail we will be more than ever convinced of its futility. The main features of Mr. Coaker's scheme are as follows:—

**COAKER'S CRAZY SCHEME.**

(1) **Three Commissioners are to be appointed by the Government with power to purchase, sell, and ship all codfish exported from Newfoundland.**
(2) **Merchants to supply and collect as at present.**
(3) **Merchants or collectors to purchase fish at a price to be named by the Commission.**
(4) **Fishermen to be paid uniform prices throughout the year according to quality.**
(5) **Merchants or collectors to prepare fish for market under inspectors appointed by the Commission, and to receive from the Commission fifty cents per quintal profit over and above all costs.**
(6) **The Commission to buy all fish collected.**
(7) **A capital of one million dollars to be supplied to the Commission by the sale of Government Bonds. (Another loan—Ed.)**
(8) **The profits made by the Commission to go to a reserve to be used for advances to fishermen, or to be provided pro rata.**

**ANALYSIS BY MR. GOSLING.**

(1) It is an axiom of economics, proven thousands of times, that no Governmental Commission can conduct a business as well as merchants who have to make a living out of it. During the war years this was the universal experience. There is no necessity here to try to explain why this should be the case. Suffice it to say that the problem has been many times analysed and that for psychological and economical reasons, failure follows Governmental control of business.

**AND THREE COMMISSIONERS.**

The next question is where are these three Commissioners to be found? Presumably from the ranks of the merchants whom Mr. Coaker declares have made a failure of the business. If they could not succeed when their living depended upon it, it is likely they will succeed when deprived of this spur to their energies? These Commissioners will require supernatural endowments: they must be able to look into the future and say what the price of fish is to be a year ahead. In other words they must be able to gauge the appetites of the Portuguese, Spaniards, Italians, Greeks, and Brazilians. They must know beforehand what the catch of our competitors in Norway, Iceland, etc., is to be. They must know what money our customers are going to have to spend. Whether the Brazilians for instance are going to prefer jerked beef, or fish, and whether the world's commerce is going to prosper or decline. In fact they have got to know so much that if there are any such men we can be sure they will not waste their time in Newfoundland, but will seek a larger field for their supreme endowments. **The Commission, being a political appointment, will be subject to all the ills consequent thereto, which in itself will be sufficient, probably, to prevent its appointment, and cause its failure if appointed.**

**NO FISHERY SUPPLIES.**

(2) I think merchants would not supply for the fishery under the scheme here proposed. Of course it may be argued that it would be better for the supplying business to be done away with entirely—and in this most people will heartily agree—but under present circumstances fortunately we cannot get along without it, and I must therefore repeat what I said at the outset of these letters: "UNDER MR. COAKER'S SCHEME THERE WILL BE VERY LITTLE FISH CONTROL."

(3) The impossibility of any Commission being able to name a price for the future that will be fair to all, has already been commented on.

**DECIDEDLY UNJUST.**

(4) This is perhaps the most UNeconomic suggestion made by Mister Coaker. Codfish is caught under very many different conditions, and at greatly varying costs, and it comes into markets at different seasons in the year and is consumed in many different markets, but notwithstanding these inherent differences the price received by all is to be the same for each quality throughout the year. It is safe to say that such a regulation would produce universal dissatisfaction. The fishermen who by industrial attention succeeds in getting his fish early to market will hardly be satisfied to get only the same price as the man who brings his fish in four months later. **The men who secure their catch under such arduous circumstances during the winter months on the South Coast will think themselves entitled to something more than the trap fishermen get.** If there is no competition or rivalry among fishermen there will be neither improvement or efficiency. WE WOULD ALL SINK TO A DEAD LEVEL, with the accent on the "DEAD!"

(5) I think that all merchants would jump at the chance to avail themselves of this proposal, but whether it would be a wise move for the country is another question. Would it tend to proper and economic handling? One merchant may be able to ship fish to market at much less than another; must he forego his advantage? It appears to me that this proposal would put a premium upon carelessness and would induce people to set up as collectors who were totally unadapted for it. But who is to stop them if they so desire it?. What part would a member for the district play in such a dispute? Under such a scheme no one would worry to find means of economical handling or shipping, for no matter how clever one was he would derive no benefit for his ability or industry. The F.P.U. motto "Suum cuique" would be flouted at every turn, so that the Union may be compelled to change it perhaps to Virgil's line **"Sic vos non nobis."**

**FRENZIED FINANCING.**

Placing the catch of codfish at 1,500,000 quintals, and valuing it as low as $5 per quintal, it would still amount to $7,500,000.00, and while this whole amount would not require to be invested at one time, I think the Commission would be compelled to do some very frenzied financing if they had to conduct this huge business upon a capital of one million dollars.

**DIVISION OF SPOILS.**

The division of the spoils—supposing that there are any—would be a great source of wrangling. May I suggest that the Government should take them from its trouble and to safeguard the bond issue. Unless the Government acting for all the people in the Colony is to get some return it seems to be that the Farmer, Lumberman and Miner will have cause for complaint.

**PRICES CAN'T BE CONTROLLED.**

To repeat, the whole trouble with Mr. Coaker's scheme is that **in spite of his previous experience** he is still obsessed with idea that the seller or producer can control the price. I have already stated the well known axiom that price can only be arrived at by bargaining, but I should add that it is generally considered that the buyer has the preponderating influence in every bargain. Owing to the perishable nature of our principal article of commerce, and to the fact that we have but a limited clientele, and many competitors, we dare not lose any consumption. We must keep on selling. THEREFORE TO ENDEAVOUR TO ADVANCE PRICES ARTIFICIALLY BY GOVERNMENT REGULATION, NOT ONLY CANNOT SOLVE OUR DIFFICULTY, BUT MUST INEVITABLY LEAD US INTO GREATER TROUBLE.

**BACK TO 1920.**

Let me once again point out that price is the result of negotiations between buyer and seller. If the market is against the seller and in favour of the buyer as it has been since 1919, shipments will be rushed to market by anxious sellers, and we will get the condition to which Mr. Coaker takes exception. If shipments are withheld by regulation, it would only transfer the competition from the consuming to the shipping point AND WE WILL GET A REPETITION OF THE "WIRE-PULLING" OR WORSE WHICH TOOK PLACE HERE IN 1920.

The feeling that something must be done is, as Daniel Webster once said, "The parent of many bad measures," and if we are not careful the present very natural—if unpleasant—condition of trade will be made the pretext for some fantastic scheme which will make our condition one hundred per cent. worse.

We know Mr. Coaker's ideas about prices. He has told us many times that he has put them up over a series of years, and we must freely acknowledge that he did always endeavour to get better prices and was therefore not without influence. BUT HE ONLY SUCCEEDED BECAUSE OF THE GENERAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE WORLD'S COMMERCE, and while our prices were advanced our values were not because all other articles advanced at the same time. When the turn came and prices began to tumble, MR. COAKER FOUND HE WAS HELPLESS TO STOP THE AVALANCHE WHICH ENSUED. **But apparently he has not yet learned his lesson and is still under the delusion that the seller can dictate the price.**

**THE CONSIGNMENT QUESTION.**

I note that Mr. Coaker attributes the low prices now ruling to the habit of shipping codfish on consignment, which has lasted he says for 200 years, and has ruined every merchant who ever went into the fish business. **Mr. Coaker's statement may I think be contradicted as a whole and in detail.** Neither merchants nor fishermen have been ruined in the fish business. As in every other business we have had fat years and lean years; on the whole we have prospered. Even in my forty years' experience I can see great improvement in the condition of our people as a whole.

**WHAT WOULD HAPPEN.**

If it were to become known that the Regulations would be again enforced on July 1st, 1923, I guarantee that there would be an entire suspension of credit, and the greatest panic and rush to realize anything realisable that this country has ever seen. What happened in 1920 would be absolutely certain to happen again all the jealousies suspicions, favoritism, and politics of the Regulation period would be revived and multiplied tenfold.

**NATIONALIZATION IN PRACTICE.**

I have barely touched upon the effect the nationalization of our fishing industry would have upon the character and mental development of our people but is probably of more importance than the strictly economic side. A recent authority says:—

"Nationalize industry and you do away with the desire for personal gain which is the dominant human motive leading to improvement, invention, and efficiency; you stereotype existing conditions; you do away with competition and all the benefits arising therefrom; and you get instead wasteful management from a horde of Government officials who ride on the backs of the taxpayers.

**The Nationalization of Industry has been one of the chief policies of the Bolsheviks in Russia, with what result I need not detail. It has been partially responsible for the death of some thirty million people; has caused industry to be reduced to but a particle of its former extent; has put Russia back in the scale of civilization a hundred years; and is being abandoned as fast as people can be found to work factories, mines, and agriculture again and on the old individualist and capitalist basis."**

## Cambridge.

**6 to 4 FAVORITE FOR BOAT RACE WITH OXFORD.**

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## The Menace of Coakerism.

ARTICLE XVI.

**ATTEMPTS TO KILL ST. JOHN'S TRADE!**

All through the writings of Mr. Coaker in the Advocate since its inception there will be noticed an apparently studied attempt to run down St. John's, her people and her trade. The business men are loaded with abuse and vilification of a most libelous nature. According to Coaker there is nothing but rottenness and dishonesty in the social and business circles of the city and the people are shown up as little better than the ancient inhabitants of Sodom before that city was destroyed. His game is evidently to plant distrust and hatred in the minds of the outport people for the inhabitants of the city.

Now a base policy like this carried on for political purposes in this insidious way is having a prejudicial effect on every man, woman and child in the city. The business people, the big merchant, the small shopkeeper, the tradesman and the laborer will all suffer by such a contemptable campaign on the part of Mr. Coaker. Does he think that the people of the city are not noticing this? Does he suppose they will not resent it?

**WILL BE RESENTED.**

The taking away of the trade from the city and the destroying of the old-time confidence that existed between the town and the outports is a proceeding that will be resented by those who will suffer thereby, and Coaker will find that his Sectional Campaign is not going to be carried on with impunity. It is hard enough now for business people, mechanics and small shop-keepers to make out a living in the city, but it will be much harder if the tactics that are being adopted by Mr. Coaker are allowed to prevail. If we judge them arightly the people of St. John's are not going to stand for this or any other feature of Coakerism. They are not going to sit down with hands folded and allow the spirit of Coakerism to ruin the trade and business of the capital.

There seems to be an insane hatred of the people of the city running through all the Coakerite writings in the Advocate. No chance is let slip in having a fling at them, socially and commercially. It is time to cry halt to this campaign, and we trust that the people of St. John's will set their faces against it and let Coaker see that it will not pay to insult the whole people of the metropolis.


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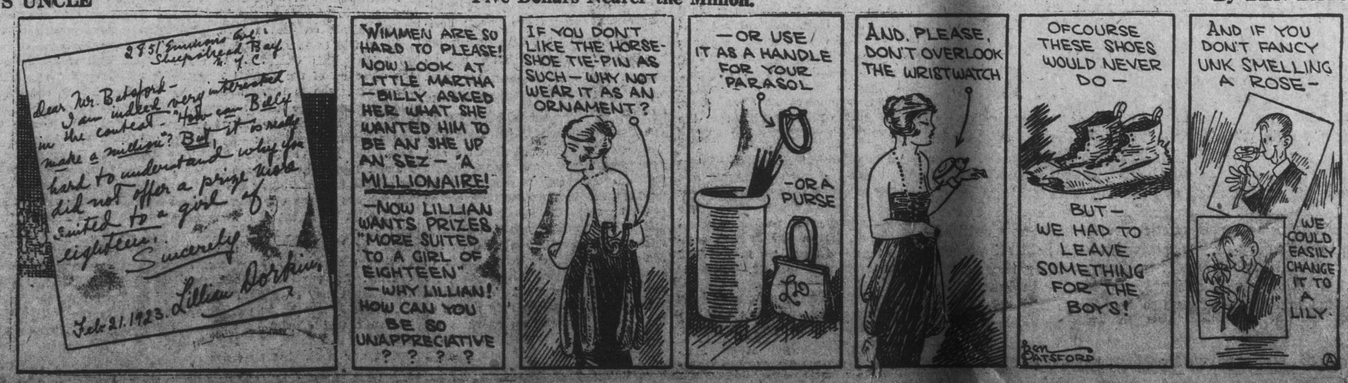
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