

*Salt Fish Board*

I am not particularly well versed. I may not know all I should know about the fishing industry, but I feel that there are many things our friends from the west do not know about it, and I think it would be well for them to read up on both sides of the whole question in order that they may intelligently discuss and understand our problems in the east, as we endeavour to be sympathetic to those in the west. I was impressed by a cartoon which I saw in yesterday's newspaper, depicting two patients in a hospital ward. The one patient is supposed to represent the western wheat grower; the other is a fisherman of the maritimes. The wheat grower is surrounded by the best physicians in the country, and the government is being advised not to spare any effort to ease his suffering. The poor fisherman of Nova Scotia, however, is left alone, without any assistance whatever.

I am very glad the minister has brought in this resolution, because it shows that the government has given some thought to the needs of our fishermen in the maritimes. I hope this board will go a long way towards stimulating the fishing industry and creating additional business, not only to the fishermen but also to stevedores and men on the waterfront, who naturally benefit when there is any export business to be obtained.

Mr. NEILL: I should like to ask the minister three questions, just for purposes of information. I shall be brief; for I know the temper of the house is to get on with the business. It is proposed to give assistance to the producers of salt fish. I should like to ask how that assistance is to be rendered. Is it to be by way of a bonus on their output, or what is to be the method? Second, they propose to enter into agreements for the exporting of salt fish. Is that to be done by the board purchasing the fish and shipping it to foreign countries, as a sort of experiment, or what is the procedure to be followed? One must presume that by the time a measure reaches this stage some policy must have been formulated. The last question I should like the minister to answer is why the word "salt" should appear in the resolution. Why could it not read:

—it is expedient to introduce a measure to establish a board to be known as the fish board with powers to investigate the marketing of fish—

Then you could give assistance to the producers of all fish for export. That would take in the fishing industry on the Pacific, which in regard to its export markets is just as greatly in need of assistance as is the industry on the Atlantic. I do not propose to deprecate

[Mr. Isnor.]

the needs of the Atlantic fishermen; as long as the maritime members are satisfied I am satisfied, but I should like to know why, when the minister is establishing a board which will cost a great deal of money, with the usual chairman and officials, and officials under the officials, it could not apply to the fishing industry all over Canada. Why confine it to one phase of the industry which concerns only the Atlantic? I should be glad to have the minister answer those three questions.

Mr. MICHAUD: In reply to the last question, it is not intended by this legislation to provide for the fresh fish branch of the industry. We feel that those who are engaged in that branch of the industry can fairly well take care of themselves, and so far they are well taken care of by indirect means. The intention of the government through this legislation is to provide for those who are in immediate need of protection, and the measure is to apply only to export trade in dried fish. It is not to apply to local trade, or what might be described as domestic trade.

The second question of the hon. member was as to the method of entering into agreements for the sale of fish.

Mr. NEILL: Of exports.

Mr. MICHAUD: Yes, I understand. The details will be determined by the board itself, in order to meet local conditions. In some respects, I am sure, the board will have to act as the agent for some classes of fishermen. For instance we know there are fishermen on the Labrador coast, on the Magdalen islands and other out-of-the-way places. They are without means of communication with buying agents who could take care of their fish, with the result that season after season those fish are left on their hands. The government is asked to dispose of quantities of such fish which have been prepared during the preceding season. In such cases the board will have to act as the agent for these people, and will have to enter into contracts with foreign buyers to take care of the fish.

The purpose of the measure is not to eliminate those who have already established themselves in the export trade, but is more to help provide them with every assistance possible to carry on their trade more profitably. Would the hon. member repeat his first question? I must confess I have forgotten it.

Mr. NEILL: I wanted to know in what form the assistance would be given to these fishermen; would it be by way of bonus?

Mr. MICHAUD: It must naturally be by some such means, whether you call it bonus, or help of some other kind. The fact is that