

Supply—Fisheries

industrial development bank and the Minister of Finance. Several parts of the fishing industry in the east and west have been helped by the industrial bank.

Mr. Pearkes: Mr. Chairman, I have a particular interest in fishermen and since my constituency joins that of the minister I imagine he is familiar with most of the problems facing the fishermen on the west coast. I was pleased to hear the minister indicate his keen interest in raising the standard of living of the fishermen. I am quite certain that he is sincere and I can say that his endeavours in that direction are appreciated by the fishermen of Vancouver island.

One of the most urgent problems, and something that will contribute to raising the standard of living of the fishermen, is the need of adequate safeguards from the storms and elements in order that boats and equipment may be protected. Many times a fisherman has to watch his boat all night when there is a storm and no adequate protection. That means that he must leave his house and family during what should be a period of rest. In his endeavours to raise the standard of living of the fishermen, I hope the minister will realize that it is essential for their ease of mind that they be provided with reasonable berthage and secure harbours in which to tie up their boats.

There is another matter which I should like to bring to the minister's attention and I am sure he will be able to give me an answer. Toward the end of February I wrote to the department and asked for information concerning the proposed revision of the halibut treaty. The deputy minister replied on February 28 that the halibut commissioner was in hospital, but that as soon as he came out I would have full information and the matter would be discussed. I do not know whether Mr. Clark has come out of hospital, but I sincerely hope that he is better.

Is the minister prepared to make a statement regarding the halibut treaty? During the past few years the season for halibut has been extremely short which has been detrimental to the industry, to the consumer and to the proper conservation of the fish. A short fishing season means that the fisherman must work long hours in order to catch his quota in a limited number of days. When the bulk of the halibut are caught in a couple of weeks the consumer across Canada is able to get fresh halibut only during that short season, the rest of the catch having to be put into cold storage. There is evidence from the biological side that it is not in the interests of conservation that the catch should take place during such a limited period.

This is a matter of considerable concern to the fishermen on the west coast. They have asked for what is known as a split season and that the fishing season be extended. I do not know what has happened since, but at the beginning of the year the fishermen expressed concern over the fact that in the draft of the new treaty there was no provision for an adequate curtailment program. Can the minister state what progress has been made with the revision of the halibut treaty and whether any steps will be taken to provide a split season for halibut fishing?

Mr. Mayhew: I think the hon. member has one of the best fishing floats on the west coast which is located in Nanaimo.

Mr. Pearkes: That is only one.

Mr. Mayhew: I think that I was responsible for that being placed there when the hon. member was fighting the battle for freedom in the war. Several others have been built since. The first one that I know of was built in Victoria about 1935, largely at my suggestion when I was a member of the chamber of commerce. It was erected almost opposite my door. I believe that these floats are of great value to the fishermen and their number have been increased since that time.

If we were to go fully into the question of a split season for halibut we would have to get down the maps and go into many details for which I am afraid we have not the time at the present moment. A suggested treaty was drawn up by Canada after the meeting of the halibut commission last fall. Although that has been done, the Americans have not yet seen fit to reply to it, or have not had time to reply. I do not know what the reason is. However, we are engaged this year in what might be called a split season. After all, a split season means two seasons in one. This year we have divided area 2 and taken the part of area 2 where it has been said that the fish come in later and therefore we might be able to get an additional halibut catch. That area has now been set aside for later fishing with no limit, for a period of ten days in order that we may study the results of just what will happen in a case of that kind. I am sure, however, that hon. members will realize that in an operation of this kind the department is guided by the biologists, by what they say is there and what it will be safe to catch.

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): I should also like to say how pleased I was to hear the minister's expression of good intentions towards the fishermen. I have always believed he had those good intentions from