

Supply—Fisheries

with certain fish processors and those engaged in this work are hoping to find a process of making light salted fish at a cost sufficiently low to enable the product to be sold at a profit. Meanwhile, production of the light salted fish now going on to the market depends on the fishermen making their own fish on the flakes—the expression “making” means drying and curing. Increasingly, the fishermen are reluctant to do this work. If they can sell their fish for practically the same price as fresh fish or as salt bulk to be made into heavy salted fish, they prefer to do that, and catch more fish, than to make light salted fish themselves. What I suggested was that we should pay an incentive bonus in respect to this light salted fish made by the fishermen until such time as we have overcome the problem of making light salted fish in mechanical dryers economically, as I am sure, in time, we shall do. That is the nature of the problem.

Mr. Macdonnell: I thank the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Pickersgill: At one o'clock I was speaking about unemployment insurance for fishermen and about one of the problems which had arisen because of the different methods of allowing stamps in the case of fresh fish and the case of salt fish. I was suggesting that because the regulations as they now stand have the effect of encouraging fishermen to sell fish as salt fish, particularly in some parts of the country, we should adapt the regulations to the economic problem instead of aggravating the economic problem by maintaining the existing regulations. I felt I must enter a caveat at that point, and that is what I was in the process of doing when we reached one o'clock. It is this: I hope the government will not consider for one minute the abandonment of unemployment insurance for fishermen.

There are many advocates of the abandonment of unemployment insurance for fishermen and the substitution of what is called a special scheme. The fishermen do not want this. They want to continue to be covered by unemployment insurance in order that they may cumulate the stamps they get through fishing with the stamps they get through other kinds of labour. Fishing nearly everywhere in Canada is a seasonal occupation and it is very difficult to get enough stamps during the season, in many places, to qualify for unemployment insurance. Contrary to what many people suggest, most fishermen do not want to qualify for benefit if they can get jobs. If the employment service is able to offer them work I believe, speaking for the people that I represent, that they would be very glad to take a job rather

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

than the insurance payments. But they must not be allowed to fall between two stools. In the days when unemployment insurance was introduced in 1957 it was still relatively easy for fishermen to get jobs in other occupations. In the preceding five or six years there had been a tremendous exodus from the fishery. The introduction of unemployment insurance halted that exodus. It kept the fishermen in the fishery during the season; they realized that when the season was over they could get work in the lumber industry, or in carpentry and get stamps which would qualify them for a short period of benefit if they became unemployed. Unfortunately, it does not work that way now, because work has been so scarce.

I was pained to read in the *Toronto Star* on April 21 an account of the statement made by the minister before the Fisheries Council of Canada in Toronto. I am sure that if the minister is not satisfied with the way he has been reported he will say so. I should just like to quote from a story which appeared in the *Toronto Star* of April 11, 1961 which reads as follows:

Hon. J. Angus MacLean, Minister of Fisheries, said the government is looking for a new approach for unemployment insurance for fishermen—

I do not mind that part of the statement at all, because I think there should be a new approach to this situation as long as it is within the ambit of unemployment insurance. Then the article reports the minister to have said, and this is in quotation marks, the following:

“—to remove the incentive which appears to be so prevalent in some areas to fish for unemployment insurance stamps.”

I do not think the minister meant that in the way it sounds. I feel that fishermen naturally want to be protected by unemployment insurance just as everyone else who is covered by it does. That is not dishonourable on their part. It is not dishonourable at all. Fishermen should certainly receive the benefits of this great social security measure. The implied suggestion that fishermen just fish to get enough stamps to live without work is, I think, quite wrong, and certainly quite contrary to any experience I have ever had. I receive letters every fall from individuals who have been fishing, who are looking for jobs in the woods, in Labrador, or anywhere else so that they may earn a living for their families. I think that is the general experience in this regard.

I suggest we change the regulations so as to rid them of some of these anomalies, but let us not contemplate for a moment the abandonment of unemployment insurance for