

The Mail and Advocate

St. John's, Nfld., Monday, October 12, 1914

The Price of Fish

WE publish today the correspondence that has recently passed between President Coaker, the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition Party on the Price of Fish and the necessity for Government action in connection therewith.

These letters, as given below, fully define the stand taken on this vitally important subject by Mr. Coaker, Mr. Kent and the Premier, Sir Edward Morris.

President Coaker to Mr. Kent.

St. John's, October 26th, 1914.

Dear Mr. Kent,—In reference to our conversation re fish situation, I am of the opinion that the Opposition Party should offer its aid to the Government in any proper measures which they may adopt with our concurrence, to prevent a slump in the price of fish. I feel sure that unless something is attempted far exceeding anything yet done by a Government in this Colony, the price of fish will slump, possibly to \$ for Shore and \$ for Labrador per quintal.

I am further of the opinion that I should bring this matter to the notice of the Premier and ask him to receive a deputation of the Opposition Party to consider the matter. Will you be good enough to state whether the Opposition, represented by you, would endorse such a step and be ready to back the Government in case they took action to meet the requirements, in as far as they would be approved of by us.

W. F. COAKER, President F.P.U.

Mr. Kent to President Coaker.

St. John's, 2nd October, 1914.

Dear Mr. Coaker,—Your letter which is dated the 26th ult., only reached me today. You express the opinion that the Opposition Party in the Legislature should aid the Government in any proper measures it may adopt, under the present extraordinary conditions, with a view to prevent the price of fish falling below its real value.

We shall be pleased to co-operate in every way in our power with the Government, in all reasonable efforts it may adopt for such a purpose. If the Government will meet representatives from the Opposition, we shall be pleased to discuss the matter with them.

J. M. KENT.

President Coaker to the Premier.

St. John's, October 5, 1914.

Dear Sir,—I am of the opinion that some steps should be taken by the Government to protect the country against a slump in the price of fish. The Opposition leaders have been considering the matter and are ready to back the Government in any reasonable measures it may take in the matter. I enclose herewith a copy of a letter written by Mr. J. M. Kent wherein he pledges the Opposition's support and co-operation. I would like you to arrange an interview with a deputation from the Opposition Party to discuss the fish situation. I trust you will do so as speedily as possible.

W. F. COAKER, President F.P.U.

The Premier to President Coaker.

St. John's, October 5th, 1914.

Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of this day's date, with enclosed copy of letter from Mr. J. M. Kent.

The subject matter of your letter, and that of Mr. Kent, namely, the preventing of the price of fish falling below its real value, is one that has received the most careful consideration of the Government, in all its aspects, since the outbreak of the war. I am quite satisfied, as you say, that the Opposition leaders are ready to back the Government in any reasonable measures they make take in the matter. I shall keep you and Mr. Kent fully informed of anything it may be possible to do. I have no doubt you and your friends fully realize the grave difficulties surrounding any action along the lines which might have to be pursued if such a policy of keeping the price of fish up were entered on.

I shall arrange for an early meeting of representatives from the Opposition to meet the Government to discuss the matter.

E. P. MORRIS.

President Coaker to the Premier.

St. John's, October 7th, 1914.

Dear Sir,—Firms are quoting from 50c. to 20c. less for fish today than on Monday. Some will not buy except from dealers and are offering only truck payment. There have not been 10,000 quintals received this week so far, yet the larger firms are offering these prices. If anything is to be done it is now it must be done and not when the slump comes. If all were convinced that the other buyers would not get fish 50c. per quintal cheaper, I think six dollars would be paid, but nearly all are looking for a slump and are holding off in buying. Unless the Colony comes forward and purchases fish or guarantees a minimum price, prices will slump within a month probably to \$. Nothing but action on the part of the Colony can save the situation. Will you respond to the offer made by the Opposition or will you remain inactive and permit the bottom to fall out of the business, is what the fishermen are now asking? If action is to be taken, the time has come for it. The Opposition Party is ready to do its part.

W. F. COAKER, President F.P.U.

The Premier to President Coaker.

St. John's, 8th October, 1914.

Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of yesterday's date, which was left in my office in the afternoon.

ter of October 5th, and pointing out to him that the Government will be only too pleased to meet the Opposition, or a deputation from the Opposition, to discuss any suggestion that they may have to make in relation to the subject matter of your letter; and, further, that we would be glad, if they desired it, to bring in to the conference the Bank managers or representative fish merchants.

Privately, my opinion is that if a slump occurs, it will very largely be due to those who advised the people to keep back their fish, the result being that there is practically no fish at present ready for market in Saint John's, and we have lost nearly two months' consumption in the foreign markets.

As soon as I hear from Mr. Kent, I shall be glad, without delay, to arrange a conference.

E. P. MORRIS.

President Coaker to the Premier.

St. John's, October 8th, 1914.

Dear Sir,—Yours of today's date received. I note that you had written Mr. Kent re a conference. I have seen your letter to Mr. Kent and his reply, and trust you will be able to call the proposed conference immediately. I note with little surprise the statement of your private opinion of my action re fish. Anyone who knows you well would expect just such an unfounded assertion, but it would have been far more prudent on your part had you abstained from expressing such an opinion until you had ascertained the facts in reference to the matter to which you refer. The facts are:—

1. There has been no with-holding of fish as your statement suggests for the exporters have had an abundant supply for exportation during September month. No new fish is ever exported from St. John's in August and during September more fish has been offered at \$6.00 than the trade wished to purchase. A month ago I offered a cargo of 1400 quintals to half a dozen fish exporters, but only one would make an offer, and only one exporter would purchase at \$6.00. Every day since I have offered shore fish but could supply far more than the demand. Every order received by the trade during September could be at a loss of \$1.50 per quintal to the fishermen, and if fish was to slump to \$4.50 it would be as much as they would have received in August and September, had I not advised them not to sell. If they can't get six dollars for all their catch, they will be no worse off than they would be had they sold at the prices offered up to the time I requested all to hold for six dollars. The six dollar figure was maintained up to the time when the supply was more than what was needed for present orders coming in, and now that the time has come to store fish for winter shipping the exporters do not know what to do as they fear changing conditions under circumstances with which the trade never had to contend before.

I am perfectly sure that if the price of six dollars for shore fish can be maintained for three weeks, after that time the purchasing of shore fish here will be very firm and prices will be inclined to advance, for there is not 100,000 quintals of shore fish now to be sold by the fishermen, and as the Labrador floaters have, owing to the lateness in catching, salted four-fifths of their catch for slopp cure, there will not be the fifth part of last year's quantity of Labrador dry offering this Fall. Consequently, there will be only about a fourth of an ordinary supply for the Brazilian market. If the Government would purchase a few thousand quintals of shore fish within the next 20 days at six dollars the trouble re shore fish would end and the exporters would re-purchase all that the Government stored by the end of the year at a profit of fifty cents.

The serious problem confronting us is the large quantity of slopp Labrador which will be offered during the next three weeks. I would suggest that as the Government has laid down the principle that it is the Government's duty to protect the public against inflated prices for provisions and assumes the right to fix the prices of food stuffs, that the same principle should, under existing circumstances, be applied to fish, and no one should be permitted to purchase at less than a certain price per quintal for Labrador slopp. Then all would pay alike for fish and one would have no advantage over the other. The exporters who possess dryers could utilize suitable qualities for drying to supply the Brazilian demands which the shore cure cannot supply. The circumstances are unique and must be met by arrangements which could not otherwise be tolerated. It is no time for counting the cost or surveying every inch of the landscape. The condition confronting the Colony must be faced with courage and bold initiative. I am ready to shoulder my full share of public responsibility if plans are elaborated on the lines suggested or on any other lines which will attain the same object.

This is no time for you to display your partisan imagination or your longing desires to hurl a poisonous shaft at the writer, and the unsuccessful attempt would be unworthy of a responsible public man, and more unworthy still of one occupying your high office and at a period when most of the fishermen's minds are unusually agitated about their commercial affairs.

Let me hear no more about a slump "being largely due to those who advised the people to keep back their fish" and "the loss of two months' consumption in the foreign markets," for on the face of the statement its contradiction is written, for how could a slump in price be possible if "there is practically no fish at present ready for market in St. John's"? For a slump in price is always the outcome of over-supply or over-stocking, and your statement entirely

am convinced that if you mean business this serious national situation can be solved in less than two hours.

W. F. COAKER, President F.P.U.

Mr. Kent to President Coaker

St. John's, Oct. 9, 1914.

Dear Sir,—The Premier is calling a meeting at the Council Room tonight at 8.30 re fish situation, at which he asks representatives of the Opposition to be present. Will you kindly attend.

J. M. KENT.

The Premier to President Coaker.

St. John's, 9th October, 1914.

Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of this day's date.

No good purpose would be served by me to reply to you in relation to the personal aspect of your letter. My only regret is that you should have considered it necessary to introduce personalities into this discussion.

In my letter to you I said that if a slump occurs in the price of fish, it will very largely be due to those who advised the people to keep back their fish, the result being that there is practically no fish at present ready for market in St. John's, and we have lost nearly two months' consumption in the foreign markets.

In arriving at this conclusion my sources of information, I think you will admit, are equal to yours, and I think I am as capable of giving an opinion on the matter as you are, but I did not trust to mere observation. I had before me, at the time I wrote, a letter from one of the largest exporters of fish in the country, in reply to a question I had asked him as to whether the holding back of their fish by our people during the last two months had had an injurious effect in reducing the consumption in the foreign markets, and consequently threatened a slump in the price of fish. His answer to this question was that it had had a most injurious effect. He went on further to say that, had things been normal, and had the fish come in as in other years, large quantities of fish could have been shipped and realized for good prices.

Further, I had before me a copy of The Evening Telegram, the official organ of the Opposition, of the issue of September 30th last, and in an editorial on the fish situation, the Editor therein stated as follows:—

"During the past two months the quantity of fish that has been shipped to foreign markets is considerably less than in normal years. This arose partly from the lateness of the catch, due to ice conditions in the early months of the fishing season, largely to the war, which paralyzed banking, upset exchange and dislocated trade. It was feared a slump in prices would ensue and fishermen generally had their catch waiting to see what would happen. The consequence has been so far that the amount of fish brought to St. John's during August and September was comparatively small. A market was found for the fish brought in and prices have ruled about \$6, but the consumption of August and September in the foreign markets has been lost and cannot be recovered."

If you are interested in pursuing the subject further, you will easily be able to obtain from independent sources, from persons largely interested in the sale and export of fish, evidence to substantiate this statement of The Evening Telegram,—that "the consumption of August and September in the foreign markets has been lost and cannot be recovered."

I have written Mr. Kent notifying him that the Government will meet the Opposition tonight in the Executive Council Chamber of the Court House at 8.30 o'clock, when I hope you may find it convenient to be present.

E. P. MORRIS.

President Coaker to the Premier.

St. John's, Oct. 9, 1914.

Dear Sir,—Your letter of today's date received. With regard to the personal aspect of my reply, you must thank yourself for had you not gone out of your way to play a worn-out tune at my expense, I would not have been forced to defend myself from false aspersions. You began it, and I but defended myself. You speak of your sources of information which you consider are quite "equal to mine." You surely possess information, but you take good care that you only ascertain what is most convenient to your ideas, for you know very little about the matter from the fisherman's point of view.

I do not hesitate to state that I know what there is to know from the fishermen's point of view as well as from that of the exporters, for I am in the closest contact with both every working hour. I doubt whether you know a score of schooner holders in the Colony and I further doubt whether you meet and converse at length with a score of outport fishermen during the Fall season. I may be wrong, but I believe I am right.

What you were informed by an exporter matters little to me for my experience of them is that they can always state what is most suitable to their interests. I have had some experience of what trust can be placed in their statements and I defy any of them to successfully deny the statements contained in my letter to you yesterday. I repeat what I then stated—that the holding back of the fish by the fishermen did not affect the consumption of fish in the markets. I again state that no new fish is marketed in August, except from the West Coast, and the West Coast could supply far more than the demand during August and September.

The principal reason for the slackness in August and September was the dislocating of trade following the declaration of war. I defy any man in the Colony to successfully prove anything to the contrary.

If any exporter stated in a letter to you that the holding back of fish by the fishermen in September had an injurious effect in reducing the consumption in foreign markets and would cause a slump in the price of fish, he stated what he knew was untrue, and if you will give me his name I shall not hesitate to so state in the public press and enable him to afford an opportunity of proving him a liar.

The slump in the price would not be caused by holding back the fish because by holding back some the price advanced

WORLD'S PRESS ON THE BIG WAR

BRITAIN'S USEFUL ROLE.

New York Press:—"Belgium has arranged to get a loan from London through the British Government itself. Thus do we see again the processes which held alliances against Napoleon. Britain has always managed to finance rather more than her share in whatever European war she entered."



PUBLIC NOTICE! PULP WOOD

Licenses to cut Pulp Wood on Crown Lands on the Labrador may be issued by His Excellency the Governor-in-Council, subject to the following conditions:—

1. The license shall continue in force until June 30th, 1915, and no longer; Provided that any Licenses shall have the right to export any pulp wood so cut at any time up to and including December 31st, 1915;
2. The Licensee shall pay an export on any pulp-wood exported of \$1.00 per cord;
3. The Governor-in-Council may prescribe the rate of wages to be paid men employed by the Licensee for the purpose of cutting and exporting such pulp-wood.
4. The export duty is to be paid at the Port of Entry when wood is exported.

Any person exporting Pulp Wood without a License shall be liable to a fine of \$5,000.00 and an amount equal to double the amount of duty on the quantity so exported.

PIT PROPS.

Any person may export by the usual export Entry any timber or Lumber for pit props to any place in the United Kingdom for one year from 1st September, 1914.

S. D. BLANDFORD,

Min. Agriculture & Mines.

Dept. Agriculture & Mines.

10th September, 1914.

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WANTED.

Two Good Reliable Coopers to make drums, etc. For terms apply to MANAGER OF COOPERAGE, Cupids. —oct12tf

NOTICE

Any person who was a member of the crew of the "S.S. Morwenna" when rendering assistance to the S.S. Lingan will apply to Capt. Holmes, "S.S. Morwenna," International Pier, Sydney, will receive their portion of the salvage.—oct10,3i



THE FIRE ALARM

may ring at a moment's notice. What a hurry and scurry and how the horses dash by to reach the fire. IF YOUR HOUSE BURNED WOULD YOU SUFFER LOSS?

It's almost a sin to think you would when insurance we write is so cheap. Before insuring see us.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY SECURE WHEN WE INSURE YOU.