

Supply—Fisheries

how a seal hunt might be conducted in a humane way.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. Alkenbrack: Mr. Chairman, my participation in debate before the committee will be fairly brief. I have three items to offer for the consideration of the committee and for the Minister of Fisheries regarding the fishing industry in my area.

As hon. members know the riding which I represent, Prince Edward-Lennox, is situated on the north shore of Lake Ontario and it is one of the few ridings in Ontario where freshwater commercial fishing is carried on to quite an extent. It is the source of a fair living at times for many of our citizens. As the minister knows, and I have apprised him of this before, of late years earning a living from that source on the north shore of Lake Ontario, yes, and Lake Erie also—and there are hon. members in this chamber who represent ridings on the north shore of Lake Erie who could express their views more ably than I could—has become more difficult. In those areas where freshwater fishing is carried on the industry has reached such an impasse that it is practically impossible for many fishermen to carry on their trade and earn a living from fishing.

In spite of the high food costs the prices of freshwater fish in general are very poor. The instability of the market for some time now has been of great concern to the freshwater fishermen of our area, particularly those of Prince Edward-Lennox. As a result of this instability as well as of other causes many fishermen are being forced out of business. I have had many inquiries from commercial fishermen in my constituency asking what the government will do to assist in the stabilization of the market. They are not asking for handouts. They are not asking for something for nothing. They want government assistance to stabilize markets, to guarantee them at least a minimum living from their product.

All hon. members recently received a report tabled in the house by the Minister of Trade and Commerce which, I hope, represents a beginning towards the goal that my questions seek this afternoon. I have a copy of that news release. The report contained in it of course is the report of the one-man royal commission of inquiry into freshwater fish marketing, which was started in July of 1965.

[Mr. Orange.]

According to the report—and I quote from the news release:

The Commission's report recommends that a Freshwater Fish Marketing Board be set up under federal legislation to handle all export and inter-provincial sales of freshwater fish in Northwestern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

I ask the minister, why is southern Ontario completely excluded from any benefits that the findings or workings of that commission might bring to the fishing industry in general across Canada? Why are we excluded? We are not mentioned in the news release. That may be an inadvertent omission. I hope it is. Why are the north shores of Lake Ontario and also, the north shore of Lake Erie excluded from this report?

I read on:

The report proposes that the board should be the sole buyer of freshwater fish from the fishermen but that services of present exporters, packers and processors be utilized under contract with the board.

I have no particular criticism of that last paragraph because in the past I believe the fishermen have had good service from the fish buyers. Of course, if the market in New York drops, then the fish buyer has to govern himself accordingly. The man who suffers at the end of the line is the fisherman producer. That is one of the reasons, as the hon. member for Gaspé pointed out, for our taking ridiculously low prices for our fish in the Great Lakes districts of late.

In closing on this point I respectfully remind the minister that the commercial fishermen of my area are waiting to find out what will be the guiding principles of the department regarding the stabilization of the markets for our fresh water fish. In fact, the fishermen are waiting now to call a meeting of inquiry in Picton pertaining to this problem.

I wish to mention something else that sorely affects freshwater fishing in the Great Lakes. I regret the necessity of bringing this subject up this afternoon, but it has been brought up in this chamber for the last two years, and we have obtained good results when hon. members have pointed out the flagrant pollution of lake Ontario by ships—allegedly by ships of foreign registry—which come to our Great Lakes system via the seaway, thinking that they have free reign and licence to dump their oil refuse and the contents of their tanks into Lake Ontario. That sort of thing has catastrophic effects on our natural resources. It affects the water