

Supply—Fisheries and Forestry

and as does everyone else, there is no point in diagnosing the patient to death without applying some form of interim remedial action. The difficulty we are up against, and this is why I suspect the Minister of Fisheries asked for suggestions, is what form this assistance should take. It is pointless to impose or introduce something which is regarded as assistance, which might in the end be as harmful to the industry as if nothing at all were done. Again I trust I do not have to draw pictures.

I explored certain points of view with the industry. I asked, "What would be the likely effects if you were able to get long term financing other than through the conventional banking system? Let us say, for example, the government or some agency of government was prepared to provide long term financing." Obviously the trade's answer was that it would not be beneficial at all, in so far as its present state of affairs is concerned, because it would not alter its profit picture. It would not narrow the gap between their operating costs and their income.

As I say, Mr. Chairman, we have explored these matters. I hope hon. members will appreciate that we are not totally unaware of the problems that exist. I then asked, "What would happen if there was some type of long-term loan to increase efficiency, to improve productivity? This is the kind of assistance aimed at getting your productivity up and your costs down." Here again the answer came back, "Of course it is desirable, but it won't help in the immediate case."

In other words, what the industry must have now is some form of direct infusion of dollars. I have to express it in that form because frankly I do not know how else to describe it. We have to get funds into the hands of the fish plant operators.

We have had a reasonably good year so far as those fishermen fishing for fresh fish plants are concerned, because the deficiency payments have kept their earnings up to the average of the last three years. But when it comes to the trawler type of operation, which will be the predominant operation for the next three or four months in Newfoundland, that formula is not very good. If we were to take the figures, analyse them out and apply the same kind of deficiency payment—even if we could do that—it is not the solution so far as the trawlers are concerned. There has been a suggestion that there might be some form of payment made based on the number of days that trawlers are at sea.

I am sure hon. members are familiar with the suggestion that payments should be made to the fish companies in terms of the losses which they obviously sustain on the operation of trawlers, but this is not something you can work out even three weeks after you get a report. This would be a very complex formula. There are questions to be asked. Does it apply only to trawler operations in respect to types of groundfish which are not profitable, because it must be remembered that there are some types of groundfish which are not as bad revenue producers as others, and some which are reasonably profitable. Secondly, does it apply to all catches for all purposes, or only to those quantities which are destined for export to the United States?

● (4:10 p.m.)

For instance, do we give some form of commitment that would apply to fresh or iced fish sold to the rest of Canada. Again, while there are difficulties involved here, they do not appear to be as extreme. Then there was the other suggestion concerning some plant help, based on the number of man-hours in the plant or some other related coefficient. Once again I suggest this is a profitable and worth-while area to explore, but is not something that can be done in a very short time. The attitude of the government is one of complete awareness of the difficulties, and I think a general disposition to help; but in the long run it really is a matter of finding a formula or solution.

Mr. Carter: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question.

Mr. Jamieson: Of course.

Mr. Carter: Does he agree with the removal of the so-called band aid policies? I am referring to the salt rebate and the vessel deficiency payments. Does he agree that these policies should be abandoned until a long range policy has been adopted to help the fishermen?

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Chairman, I must have done a poor job of communication, because obviously the hon. member has not understood me. In the first place, the salt subsidy is not part of what we are talking about. Of course I do not agree with its removal. I am talking about the deficiency payment, which I assume is what the hon. member has asked about. I am afraid we had no other alternative. As any knowledgeable gentleman opposite knows, there was no alternative but to remove that program and end it as of the end