

Supply—Fisheries

Fraser Brothers has already announced concrete plans so that deadlines will not have to be invoked.

● (8:50 p.m.)

As I say, we know what the problem is. It has been studied backwards and forwards, or upwards and downwards, whichever way you prefer it. It seems to me the time has come for a concentrated effort to be made by the joint authorities of Ottawa and Fredericton, representing as they do the national and provincial governments, to clear up this problem. I speak with some feeling about it because my constituency contains the Saint John river, a fine river, and five of its tributaries, together with two large lake systems that flow into the Saint John river.

I have always had a great interest in seeing that the river be cleaned up, and that not only our sports fishery but the commercial fishery be protected on this great waterway.

Mr. Danforth: Mr. Chairman, I would like to support the contention made by my colleague, the hon. member for Grey North, who spoke on some of the problems facing inland fishermen. My purpose in rising is mainly to seek concrete information from the minister. He knows that so far as the fishermen of lake Erie are concerned an absolute disaster was averted by the marketing procedures universally engaged in, which allowed the fishermen to get a price of 8 cents to 12 cents a pound where formerly prices had dropped to 1½ cents to 3 cents per pound.

I would like the minister to disclose what long range plans, in conjunction with the provincial government, that he has to restore the lake Erie fishing operation. Although a layman I am well aware extensive research on the waters has been engaged in both by the provincial and federal authorities. This has covered different methods of fishing, but the fact still remains that since the invasion of the lamprey eel only two main varieties of fish are taken from lake Erie on the Canadian shore, namely smelt and perch.

The minister knows that a few yellow pickerel have worked their way down the lake, but if anything should happen to the market for perch and smelt fillets, which are very small and are more or less a luxury demand, the fishermen would be in dire economic circumstances. I would appreciate very much if the minister would outline what his department, in conjunction with the provincial department, envisage in their experimental work and their plans for this fishery.

[Mr. Fairweather.]

Mr. Davis: Mr. Chairman, I shall be brief but I do want to make a determined plea to the minister to continue the special subsidy which was instituted last year and directed toward the catching and processing of dogfish on the west coast. Dogfish is a shark-like fish that grows to as much as five feet in length. It is a predator and lives off many of the smaller fish species on the coast. It has been free to proliferate in recent years, because there has been no commercial market for it.

During the war years it was caught in considerable numbers and processed for its vitamin A content. Prices as high as \$3 per pound were available at that time. But as a result of developments in the chemical industry during and following the war, vitamin A began to be made synthetically. The demand for dogfish livers fell off and there has been no commercial incentive to catch dogfish ever since.

Dogfish is the fish which is caught in the North Sea and which provides most of the flesh for fish and chips in the United Kingdom. Although it has no commercial value on our coasts, it does have a commercial value in the North Sea. It is caught in substantial numbers by the Norwegians, in fact in such numbers that dogfish, or greyfish as it is known in the North Sea area, has to be protected. During the war years we landed as much as 40,000 tons per annum. Recently catches have been negligible, but for the last two years experiments have been conducted on the west coast with a view to reducing the cost not only of catching these fish but of processing and transporting them to markets overseas.

I would like very much to see these experiments continue. I understand that last fall some \$25,000 was set aside by the Department of Fisheries and a limited experiment conducted, the results of which are not available at this time. There is a substantial market for these fish, particularly in the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium. Conceivably markets could be developed in time for dogfish flesh in North America. A modest subsidy would be required in the initial stages but, as I mentioned, it is becoming a relatively scarce commodity in Europe.

The economics of processing and transportation have yet to be fully explored and I would urge the department to continue its experiment this year. If it is successful we should be able to bring our dogfish population under control and substantially increase the salmon, herring, pilchards and other species which are being decimated by the greyfish, or