

*Supply—Fisheries*

As Labrador is in my riding I should like to mention another matter of which I learned during this past summer when I was visiting the Labrador coast. I refer to the great scarcity of salt which existed during last year. I think something special will have to be done in the way of providing salt depots for the Labrador. I believe this is a matter which will have to be looked into. As we know there was the royal commission on fishery development which was investigating fisheries and which brought in its report last year. This report is being implemented. I hope that something will be done to see that salt depots are provided so that when the fish are at hand the fishermen will have a ready source of salt which will enable them to preserve the fish. In that way they will be able to have some earning power. Fishing, of course, is practically the only means of employment they can have in the summer-time.

At La Scie, at which I believe a large plant is to be installed, there is also available a large catch for the fishermen. In the past they have had to salt their catch, thus getting, so to speak, a much smaller earning power than would be available to them if a filleting plant were in operation there. With the implementation of the recommendation of the report of the Walsh fishery development commission I believe that there will now be installed in Newfoundland some of these up-to-date plants which will look after, not only the filleting of the fresh fish, or the utilization of the fish in the fresh state, but will also, by modern up-to-date dryers, take care of some of the salt fish which requires to be cured.

There was a time in Newfoundland when most of the fish drying was done on the flakes, a great deal of it being done by the women of Newfoundland. In those days there was quite an art in making good fish. I noticed that this afternoon the minister emphasized the quality of fish. In those days, provided the weather was good and the climate favourable, there was no lack of good merchantable fish. But, unfortunately, it seems that in the last few years the export of merchantable fish, the best quality fish, has fallen off to a considerable degree.

The fishery, which means so much to our fishermen and which, as I said before, is the only means of livelihood for many of these people, is being looked after, and I think the provision of loans for fishermen is most necessary. These men do not have a great amount of money. They need dollars in order to procure gear and fishing boats, and an opportunity should be afforded them to obtain loans more easily in order that they may equip themselves to catch fish.

[Mr. Ashbourne.]

Emphasis was placed this afternoon on the question of conservation, and it is most essential. The international treaties are of mutual advantage. The Grand Banks are and have been throughout the centuries a most important reservoir of food and we should realize that there is great need for conservation of the supply so that throughout the centuries to come the fish will be available that are so essential and necessary to provide the protein that our people need.

Then there is the question of the great seal herds that come south each year and are found off the strait of Belle Isle. During the past few months several vessels have been prosecuting the seal fishery. Unfortunately there have been some losses and the catch this year was not very good. We are very thankful that the government has provided an aerial survey so that statistics can be gathered respecting the quantity of seals available. I should like to point out the great loss to our nation in the past through allowing carcasses of seal meat to go to the bottom of the ocean when they could have provided good edible food for our population. In fact the kidneys and livers of young seals are very nutritive. I think that there should be further study of the sealing industry in order that there may be utilization not only of the pelts, the seal oil, fat and skins which in the past the fishermen have been in the habit of bringing to port, but also of the by-products so that the greatest possible benefit may be derived from these materials which are our natural heritage and which in the past have gone to waste.

Today the oil markets are depressed. The demand for oil seems to be very small. We realize also that the introduction of plastics has affected the production of leather goods. Air travel has created a need for very light luggage. This of course has reacted against the leather trade and has brought into being new synthetic materials. This has affected the livelihood of those people who engaged in catching seals for their pelts and skins and to whom the industry meant so much.

I should also like to refer to the whaling industry which is also practically extinct in Newfoundland. However, I think that perhaps a closed season is all to the good. When whale oil is so low in value it is better to let the whales go and allow them to increase until the market for oil becomes better. The territorial limits for our fishermen need to be extended and the interests of our shore fishermen protected to the utmost extent.

The delegation which will be going to Europe will be trying to bring about additional sales in our codfish markets of Portugal, Spain and Italy. We are glad to know