

Supply—Fisheries

I wish to say something about unemployment insurance in relation to the fisheries. I shall not talk about those aspects of unemployment insurance for fishermen that are properly the concern of the Minister of Labour. I recognize, of course, that the Minister of Labour would have to sponsor any amendments to the unemployment insurance regulations or to the act itself. I do not think amendments to the act are needed to accomplish what I am going to suggest should be done, but I do think amendments to the regulations are needed, and I believe the Minister of Fisheries should be urging these changes upon the Minister of Labour because they are changes which affect the balance between the fish that goes into the salt fish markets and that which goes into the fresh fish markets.

As the minister very well knows, a fisherman who makes his own salt fish is allowed to average his catch over the whole season and get stamps in proportion, but those who sell fresh fish to the fish plants are not allowed to do that. There may be occasions when the earnings for a two week period are averaged, but not more than that, and generally speaking the earnings of each week have to be treated separately. This has the effect of interfering with the proper economic distribution of the fish as between fresh and frozen fish plants, and the making of salt fish or the selling of fish as salt bulk.

I know from my experience in my own riding that in one or two promising areas where there were fresh fish plants, those plants have been closed because the fishermen would not sell to them due to the fact that they could not get their unemployment insurance stamps, whereas they could obtain stamps by selling salt bulk to be sent to Nova Scotia to be processed there. I have no objection to the Nova Scotians buying salt bulk in Newfoundland. There is no doubt but that it has helped a great deal to keep up the price of fish and has contributed to the income of the fishermen. But I do say it is a shame to have fish plants closed in Newfoundland which are willing to pay the same price and perhaps an even better price than that paid for salt bulk, but which the rigid regulations of the unemployment insurance commission make the fisherman unwilling to sell to them.

I know there are those who go about in a sneering way—most of them seem to come from areas a long way from the Atlantic region—and say that all the fishermen have done since they obtained unemployment insurance has been to fish for stamps. I say that is a libel on a hard working section of our population. The fishermen, like working men in other sections of the population, want

reasonable protection under unemployment insurance. I know this is not very well understood in many other parts of the country, but let me say that the fishermen want unemployment insurance and not some other form of social security, because, with unemployment insurance, they are able to continue working in periods when they cannot fish and thus, by getting additional stamps, build up their social security. There are those who say that instead of unemployment insurance there should be a special scheme for fishermen, but that would not suit the fishermen in that it would mean they could not go to the woods when the fishery is over to earn their living with the continuing advantage of unemployment insurance. What they want is to have the two kinds of employment under the same unemployment insurance scheme.

Mr. Chairman, may I call it one o'clock?

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Macdonnell: I wonder if I may ask the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate a question. If I correctly understood him, he said this morning that a certain type of fish is not being so produced that the best quality is reaching the various markets. Would he please say something further on that subject before he resumes his seat?

Mr. Pickersgill: The situation is this: there are certain markets in which only what is called heavy salted fish is acceptable. There are other markets which insist on light salted fish. Of course, light salted fish is a product, almost exclusively, of Newfoundland. I say "almost exclusively" because I see the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Fisheries looking at me, and I believe the only other place where it is produced is in Gaspé. There is no market for heavy salted fish in Europe. The market is only for light salted fish of a high quality.

I was saying this morning that there was not enough of this high quality fish being produced to satisfy the demand. No one has yet found a way of processing light salted fish in mechanical dryers cheaply enough to enable it to be produced successfully for export. There was an experiment carried out at Bonavista which proved that Italian fish could be made successfully, in artificial dryers, but it cost more to make it than it would sell for. The problem is one on which the department is working at the present time particularly in Valleyfield and in co-operation