

*Salt Fish Board*

by the means of subventions, subsidies and bounties, our Canadian product in markets which were formerly enjoyed by our exporters.

No one in Canada is responsible for the existence of the present conditions in the salt fish industry. Nevertheless we have to meet a condition under which about twenty thousand people have to depend for their livelihood, and that of their dependents, on the returns of a trade which to-day does not return the cost of production. It may be said that these twenty thousand Canadians should turn to some other occupation. But everyone who is familiar with the geography and the economic conditions of the Atlantic coast knows that it is impossible to absorb that number of people into industries which do not exist. In the localities where these fishermen are situated, the land is not adaptable to profitable farming. There are no manufacturing industries of any kind and there are no natural industries that could take care of these people.

For the last five years the annual return to those who have been engaged in the production of salt fish averaged about \$190 to each fisherman.

Mr. MANION: Per year?

Mr. MICHAUD: Per year. With no prospect of any immediate natural improvement, it becomes absolutely necessary either to place these people on relief rolls, or, through some help, enable them to derive from their only possible occupation sufficient to maintain themselves and their dependents.

Commissions, both federal and provincial, public bodies, socially-minded private individuals, during the last ten years, have investigated these conditions. They have been almost unanimous in their suggestions that some help should be given to these people to enable them to continue in their present occupation pending an economic readjustment.

It is intended to constitute a board made up of men who have acquired experience in the salt fish industry who will suggest and bring about improvements in the methods of preparing the fish for export, and in the methods of marketing. It is intended to provide a limited amount of money to enable the board to carry on its work, and provide some assistance to the fishermen who cannot make enough out of their industry to take care of themselves and their dependents. The adverse conditions which have prevailed in the dried and salt fish industry have had the effect of forcing many of the Atlantic fishermen to turn to the fresh fish business and the lobster trade. The result has been to force down returns in these two branches of the industry to unprofitable levels and bring

[Mr. Michaud.]

about a general all-round depression in all branches of the industry. It is hoped that by a revival of the dried and salt fish trade, the pressure on the fresh fish and lobster trade will be released. With the expansion of our markets for fresh fish, both at home and abroad, and the expected reduction in the number of those employed in it, one is justified in assuming that better conditions will prevail in the fishing industry and among the fishermen.

Mr. PELLETIER: The minister states that this resolution is to precede legislation which will create a board in order to bring about improvements in the fishing industry, especially with relation to packing for export. A moment ago the minister admitted frankly that his foreign market had vanished. I do not see any reason why he should not be quite frank about it and say clearly: We used to depend on foreign markets, but we now find that owing to changes in world conditions and for various other reasons the fishermen are without any more markets.

It seems to me that this type of resolution is the same as the resolution which was presented by, for example, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Rogers) to assist employment and to alleviate agricultural distress. At this time it happens to be for the salt fishermen of Canada, and of course I admit that they need this assistance. But I can never understand why it is necessary for various departments of the government to set up boards of this kind in order to help out one particular branch of one industry. I do not see any reason why it should not be said at once that unemployment and distress are national problems. Instead of the government trying to evade its responsibility, or only partly fulfilling its duty, by segregating each industry and setting up a board for one industry or another, I do not see why the whole thing could not be consolidated and the government properly accept its responsibility throughout the country. The Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Michaud) admits that his markets have vanished. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner), I know, is experiencing difficulty in finding markets for Canadian exports. The same can be said to apply in respect of almost every producing industry in this country. That is why I say that instead of creating a whole flock of boards, each to take care of one industry, it should be possible for the government to centralize these activities and admit its responsibility on a national basis.

Is it the intention, through the legislation to be based on this resolution, to give