

Supply—Fisheries and Forestry

I cannot stress too strongly the need for the government to take immediate action on this thorny problem.

For the long term benefit of the fishing industry I can only suggest that the government in future use more of its fisheries budget to help educate North American housewives on the nutritional value of eating seafood. In my opinion, in the past there has been too much emphasis on the productive end of the fishing industry and insufficient emphasis on the marketing of fisheries products. I should think it would be possible to perfect a seafood sandwich that could be sold at drive-ins. This is something upon which the department could work. In addition, well prepared fish and seafood luncheons could be served in our schools. More imaginative seafood displays could be used in our stores, and a training program instituted for the managers of seafood departments in our supermarkets. All of these things would be helpful.

We have heard much about the progress being made in the Kennedy round of GATT negotiations. We are told that the United States tariffs on cooked and uncooked fish sticks of 30 per cent and 20 per cent respectively are being reduced by 50 per cent over a five year period. In other words, the final stage will not be reached until January 1, 1973. In my opinion, Mr. Chairman, this is not good enough. It is too little too late because there are still formidable barriers which make it very difficult for Canadian firms to compete in United States markets.

On the Canadian scene, it would be very helpful if the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce—I am glad to see him in his seat this morning—would get together with the Minister of Transport, if he could find him, in an effort to speed up the railway service on less than carload shipments of fresh fish. As the minister is aware, the industry has made great strides in the processing, packaging and shipping of fresh fish to our markets in Ontario and Quebec. We are dependent on rail shipments to these markets to which we ship around 12 million pounds per year. At the present time we are faced with increased costs on these shipments. In fact, I believe it was last September that charges on these shipments increased by something like 10 per cent, a cost which the industry can ill afford to bear.

This, in itself, was harmful to the industry but even more important and even more harmful are the delays experienced by some

[Mr. Crouse.]

of our processors in their l.c.l. shipments. I would point out that fish is very perishable and time is of the essence. Time is most important in the transportation of such a highly perishable product as fresh fish. Anything that the Minister of Fisheries, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce or the Minister of Transport could do to lower these costs or to speed up the delivery of fish would be beneficial to the entire Atlantic coast industry.

● (12:50 p.m.)

On the international scene Canada should take the lead in establishing sound conservation measures as well as a more rational basis for international merchandising of fisheries products. I want to warn the government that unless conservation measures are soon taken to prevent the increasing depletion of our groundfish stocks by foreign fishermen, the day is fast approaching when the offshore and inshore fishing industry on Canada's east coast will become uneconomical.

It is evident that the approach used to date for the implementation of Canada's Territorial Sea and Fishing Zones Act, passed in 1964, has not been successful. However, if that act had been implemented as promised in 1964 there would have been a reduction in the catches of fleets from other nations which now fish these waters and consequently there would be less pressure on our traditional markets. At the same time, hopefully, our Canadian catches would have increased and unit costs would have decreased.

In my opinion and for the reasons I have stated, the government therefore has a considerable measure of responsibility for the situation which exists today in our fishing industry, a situation which has existed for some time and which, if the government does not take any action, will exist for some time in the future. In closing may I say I hope the government will face up to its responsibilities and to the challenge that is before it, for the benefit of our fishermen who for too many years have been the forgotten Canadians.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, I am a little startled and surprised to be called on since it is so close to one o'clock. I realize I will not have the opportunity, at least before lunch, to explore all of the various topics I wish to discuss. However, I should like to add my congratulations to the minister upon his appointment and to say that in all the dealings I have had with him up to the moment he has been most cordial. I have been