

*Supply—Trade and Commerce*

a country as small and as lacking in material wealth as Iceland is, could possibly carry on for any considerable length of time. But the fact remains that the loss of the Jamaican market, which has been one of the best and most stable markets for Newfoundland fish since time immemorial, is a very serious blow to the whole industry. The loss of this market is the result of non-economic competition of a character at least as objectionable as the competition from another country in the wheat market, to which hon. gentlemen on the treasury benches have taken such strong exception in times past.

I do suggest to the minister that, if it is necessary to do so, extraordinary means should be adopted by the government to recover this market. If it is not recovered, if the Canadian producers of salt codfish have to try to find a market in the remaining Caribbean areas, then the results will be serious because we are having to meet subsidized competition from France and Norway in particular in those markets. As the minister knows, for many years we have not been able, because of currency restrictions and exchange controls that he mentioned, to sell fish in Brazil or the other places. The minister indicated another effort was being made to get back into that market. I wish him every success in this effort.

The fact of the matter is that in this salt fish industry, because of the current high levels of unemployment in the Atlantic provinces and because also of the action of the previous administration in inaugurating unemployment insurance for fishermen, we have had a considerable number of men return to the fishing industry. It is estimated that in Newfoundland perhaps 2,000 additional fishermen are engaged in this industry this year. It is of the utmost importance, if the industry is not to face a very serious condition with a very large surplus overhanging the market, that something be done not merely to hold the markets we have but to recover the market in Jamaica and to get back, if we possibly can, into the market in Brazil. Above all, everything should be done to hold and expand the more lucrative European market.

It is for the purpose of drawing to the attention not merely of the minister and the government but of all hon. members, the plight of this industry, the oldest industry in our country, that I speak at this time.

This industry does not rank as high as many others in total monetary value of exports, but it is fair to say that for every thousand dollars of exports more employment is probably created by this industry than any other industry that we have in the country.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

A special effort should be made to meet the big problems which this industry faces. One of those problems, as the minister knows, is that the price which is received for fish is set in a world market. There is no way in which the fishermen can get any protection, and yet for most of the things our fishermen have to buy, they not only have to pay the price of goods produced in a protected market but in many cases the price of goods that are produced in the central part of Canada which, in many cases, is higher than the price of those goods in the markets in central Canada. I am sure the minister is very familiar with this argument, coming as he does from the part of the country in which he and I lived for so long.

The minister said he hoped we could get back into the Jamaican market if we could meet the prices which our competitors might be willing to quote in that market. It may be that we will not be able to meet those prices any better on the 1st of January than we were on the 1st of July, not because our fishermen are not producing as efficiently as they could, not because we are not trying to cut costs wherever we can, but because the government of another country is subsidizing the exports, as is certainly the case now with Icelandic exports to Jamaica. As the minister knows, we in Canada are a very considerable customer of Jamaica. I should be very surprised indeed if the people of Iceland provide a very large market for Jamaica. It does seem to me, and I am not suggesting any kind of threat or anything of that sort, that this is a rather powerful argument for the minister's officials to use in any discussions of this subject in the West Indies.

I think some of us, on this side of the house at least, will have something more to say about this subject when the motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Ottawa West comes up for debate, we hope next Monday. In the meantime, I wanted to bring the minister's attention to this problem as forcibly as I could. This minister said, quite correctly, that the market was very good at the moment for fresh and frozen fish. Experience tells us this condition will be influenced by the price of meat generally, but the price of beef particularly. I am told by people with long experience in the fish trade that when the price of beef goes up, the market for fish rises. If the price of beef falls, the market for fish generally falls too, in areas like the United States where consumers can readily shift from one product to another. I think all of us, not only the members from the Atlantic provinces and the minister himself, but from the greater part of Canada, are very apprehensive about that question, the shortage of fodder in western