

Mr. STEVENS: Then parliament should be made aware of what had happened, and perhaps more drastic measures should be made effective. I have not an atom of sympathy with any institution which would cause loss or suffering to a body of primary producers, just out of spite; just because a policy they advocated was not put into operation—not an atom of sympathy; and nothing this parliament could do would be too severe in dealing with such a situation.

Mr. POTTIER: Refer it to the fisheries committee.

Mr. STEVENS: No, this is something to be acted on right now. I am not reflecting on the fisheries committee at all. Refer your twelve mile limit and these other questions to the committee, but on this particular question let us have action. Let the government, I was going to say, take the bull by the horns, but that would be a mixed metaphor—let them take the fish by the tail and refuse the licences this year, and let us see what will happen as a result. My own feeling is that if these corporations play the game decently there will be benefit to the fishermen, and we shall find that we can get along without the trawler. If the result is such as to warrant it, one might—I am not saying that it should be done—consider the question whether the corporations should be compensated for the loss of the trawlers, assuming it were considered desirable as a matter of permanent definite policy that there should be no trawlers. Let us at least give it a trial. If three trawlers are good for the fishing industry, if trawling is the best way as the hon. member for Huron North seemed to suggest a little while ago, then why not six or twelve or twenty-four trawlers?

An hon. MEMBER: Never.

Mr. STEVENS: No, there would be a revolution down there.

Mr. CAHAN: Will my hon. friend allow a question?

Mr. STEVENS: Certainly.

Mr. CAHAN: Has he considered the effect of abolishing trawling in the maritime provinces, and allowing trawler fish to come into our markets under the present customs duties?

Mr. STEVENS: I would certainly deal with that situation by increasing the duties if they did come in to any great extent. My hon. friend has asked a reasonable and pertinent question, but let us look at this thing. We have an asset in our fisheries which we in this parliament control. We have

[Mr. Michaud.]

some thirty to forty thousand fishermen engaged in that industry, with tens of thousands more indirectly affected. In three provinces fishing is substantially the major industry. The maintenance of this industry is something worthy of almost any action on our part. If fish filter into our markets from trawlers from Boston or other United States ports, we can deal with that situation, and I would not hesitate to deal with it. This idea that protection is something which should be eternally abhorred is all wrong. In taking that attitude we belie ourselves because we give protection indirectly, this way and that, in many ways; but hon. gentlemen opposite cry to high heaven when the word "protection" is used. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and reasonable protection for indigenous industries of this kind is the perfectly sound and natural course for us to take, I would not hesitate a moment to meet a contingency of that kind by adequate protection. But let us give to the fishing industry the opportunity which is now before us of doing something at least towards its improvement.

Hon. J. L. ILSLEY (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this question. I do not know that I would have spoken this afternoon except for the remarks made by the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Stevens). He seemed to assume that the issue here was one between the interests of the fisherman and the interests of the big companies or of one big company, and of course after my hon. friend, with his parliamentary experience and forcefulness, repeats that a number of times hon. members and others are perhaps likely to assume that it is the real issue. The question here is not whether parliament or the minister should act in the interests of the Maritime National Fish company or in the interests of the fishermen of Nova Scotia. The question here is what is in the interests of the fishermen of Nova Scotia.

I should like to say a few words about the background of this matter and about the trawler issue generally. I have listened to discussions in this house during many sessions, and the situation does not develop a great deal as the years go by. There are, however, some slight changes.

As has been pointed out, there are fishing on the banks off the shores of Nova Scotia, the banks of the north Atlantic, about three hundred American and foreign trawlers. Canada has, all told, three trawlers under licence, all three owned by one company, the Maritime National Fish company, which has its head office at Halifax and does business