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The Campaign to Increase the Consumption of Fish

At a recent conference of municipal executives of the Province of Quebec, which was called together by the Union of Canadian Municipalities for the purpose of assisting in the propaganda to increase the consumption of fish as the best substitute for those staple foods now so urgently required at the front, Mr. J. J. Harpell, representing the Fish Committee of the Food Controller's Office, gave the best reasons uttered so far as to why it was well nigh impossible to have fixed retail prices for fish for all Canada. His reasons may be epitomized as follows:

Canada is a land of great distances and long haulages, meaning different freight rates to different centres.

Uncertainty of catch, particularly of those fish in most demand, such as halibut.

Lack of knowledge on the part of the public of what fish are in season and consequently at their cheapest.

Mr. Harpell went on to state that though it was not politic to fix prices, the Fish Committee would take very sharp action against any dealer found making excessive profits out of fish, and suggested that the local authorities could do more than anyone else to control the prices, by sending in any complaint of undue profits to the Dominion Fish Committee. And to help the local authorities keep down excessive profiteering, the Fish Committee would be only too pleased to send to the councils from time to time, through the Union, the wholesale price lists.

With Mr. Harpell's reasoning we are bound to agree, which in other words means that the responsibility of keeping down the prices of fish, and other foods for that matter, rests with the local authorities. Their duty then seems to be to first create the demand for fish with the aid of the local press, and which can best be done by an assurance to the citizens that only reasonable profits will be allowed to the dealers and second, to convince the local dealers that it is in their own interest to keep their fish fresh and to charge but reasonable prices. The fact of the citizens knowing that the local authorities have by them a wholesale price list, and who are prepared to take action if necessary, will be a strong check on profiteering.

To carry out these plans in anything like a thorough manner requires much thought, and would be better done by a committee of the council appointed for that specific purpose, as suggested in the letter sent out by the Union of Canadian Municipalities, and published in last month's Journal. A French translation is published in this issue for the information of the municipal councils of Quebec.

We believe that in this fish propaganda the municipal councils of Canada have a specific opportunity to convince the world of the practical nature of their patriotism, and there is very little doubt of the backing of the citizens, provided the propaganda is properly handled by the local committees. By each municipal council joining in this campaign of increased fish consumption within its community, more of the staple foods now required by our Allies would be released than by any other means, and it is the bounden duty of each member of each council to do his best towards making the campaign the success it deserves. There is another phase of this subject that deserves mention, and that is that the fishing industry is essentially Canadian, so that in urging the consumption of fish the councils would be serving two purposes—helping the mother country and our own boys at the front, and supporting a Canadian industry, and we might add a third purpose would be served in raising the standard of health of the people, and increasing their buying power, for fish is healthful and cheap.