

VOX POPULI: VOX DEI!

Fishermen Hold Magnificent Demonstration.

C. C. C. Hall Packed From End to End and Hundreds Unable to Gain Entrance -- Unanimous Condemnation of Coaker's Regulations.

The meeting of fishermen and people generally who are affected directly by the fishery, which took place last night in the C.C.C. Hall, showed only too well that conditions as they now exist, must change. The meeting was called for half-past seven, but long before that hour the spacious hall was thronged, every seat and available standing place being occupied. Those who had charge of the meeting, in order to make more room requested the men seated to draw their chairs closer together. This was done, and a couple of hundred others who were on the stairway gained admittance, while others from outside pushed in to take their places. Outside the hall about twice the full of it waited till the meeting was over to hear the result from their fellow fishermen. In spite of the large gathering the meeting was one of the most orderly ever held in the city, and the speakers one and all acquitted themselves in a most creditable manner. Not a dissenting voice was heard, and though the use of the platform was repeatedly offered to any of the audience who held contrary views to the speakers, not one availed of the opportunity. All present were of a unanimous mind that the Regulations were the cause of the present chaotic conditions. The meeting was called by the fishermen who are in the city with fish, which they cannot dispose of. The hire of the hall was paid for by a collection made amongst the fishermen, the proof of which was submitted by one of the committee, who reading an article from the Daily Star, stating that Morine and Bradley's cheque had paid for it, literally caught that paper with the goods. After reading the article in question, he tore the paper in shreds, and tramped on it, amidst thunderous applause. The paper had often lied, but this time it was caught red-handed. The Chairman of the meeting, too, bowed out the Advocate in its bluff of the fishermen. He read an extract from that paper dated Oct. 10th, telling how everything was going good, and that the Regulations were keeping the prices up, etc., while at the same time a notice had been published, at the instance of the Advisory Board, telling shippers that they should not then charter vessels for Labrador fish as the markets were overstocked. Thus the two Government papers were proved conclusively to be lying to the fishermen.

Precisely at 7.30 the committee, consisting of Frank Greene, Greenspond; Sidney Hill, Wesleyville; Jabez Windsor, Wesleyville; Henry White, Greenspond; Aaron Burry, Greenspond; and Samuel Collins, Greenspond, ascended the platform and were greeted with a tremendous outburst of cheering. Mr. Collins rose and asked that a Chairman be appointed. Capt. A. Kean was proposed by Mr. Hill and seconded by Mr. Burry.

CHAIRMAN OPENS MEETING.

Capt. Kean then came forward, and after the cheering had subsided, said that he was much pleased to see such a magnificent audience, and it was due to the fact that the purpose of the meeting was made clear, and also his position regarding it. He had been approached and was told that it was the unanimous consent of the committee of fishermen present that he should act as Chairman. "This meeting," said the veteran captain "was not brought about by my dictation. It was brought about by men who feel that they have a grievance, and it is their desire to get the support of the country in finding a remedy. It is the purpose of this meeting to find out why fishermen coming to St. John's cannot get a sale for their fish. In questions like this there are men who take sides; one side will back the fishery regulations, another will think the regulations are detrimental (hear! hear!) and a third class who don't believe in the fishery regulations, but think it not right to oppose them at this particular crisis. This third class I don't see much regard on. I would like to see here on the platform men who are favorable to the regulations, and would like them to express their opinions. Do you wonder that men should call a public meeting to express their opinion? Last spring the fishermen were told they would get \$12.00 and \$10.00 a quintal for their fish, and now they could only get \$7.00 and \$8.00. If they could sell it at all. I may tell you men, that while walking up the

street to-day with an exporter of 30 years' standing, who was not in favor of the regulations, he said that he thought it would be the greatest calamity to do away with the fish regulations now. I replied, I am not in favor of the regulations. A meeting has been called by a dozen or 14 reputable citizens of our country, and they ask me to be Chairman. I am going to meet that Committee now, and will you come with me. The merchant replied, 'No, I do not care to be mixed up with them.' Gentlemen, the question has to be settled right. If the move we make is wrong, it will have no effect, but if right it will leave its impression on the country for generations to come. A set of resolutions will be read to you, and if there is a fisherman here who is in favor of the fishery regulations he may come on the platform, and I am sure he will get an attentive hearing. So far as a strike or using force was concerned I would not be a party to it, but I was always willing to act as chairman of a fishermen's meeting no matter what side of politics they were on. With these few remarks, I now declare the meeting open."

SKIPPER CALLS \$8.00 BLUFF.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—You may wonder who I am; well, I am Frank Greene from Greenspond, and the Daily Star to-day says I am an Opposition trickster. I say I am a fisherman, who catches fish to make a living. There is no Opposition or Government in this matter. I am here to get a living. Frank Greene went overseas when the war broke out in 1914, and did not come back till it was over. I am here to sell my fish and I have tramped Water Street but could get no offer for it. Fish is no good now, men. We are told to catch and make good fish and we did so, but we cannot get the price we were promised for it. If we have smart men running the Government, why did they not tell us this deadlock was coming? Every one is suffering now. Why are the factories in St. John's closed down? It is because our fish is lying in schooners in the harbor and no sales can be made. If the fisheries go down, Newfoundland goes down. I fought for her, and I think I should now fight to keep her up. If the regulations have brought us to this pass, well then tear them up. Is there proof that the regulations are good [No! No! No!] We have fish in our vessels and can't sell it, while our families are in want. Out came a hand-bill this evening, I suppose it was from the Star or Advocate office, saying "Don't sell your fish for less than \$8.00." Why did they not offer this money during the week. I suggest that a deputation wait on Mr. Coaker, and ask him to sell our fish at these prices. I will now read a resolution for you men. Drink down every word of this resolution, and if it don't satisfy you spit it up again. (The resolution will be found elsewhere.)

MR. JABEZ WINDSOR CALLS HAWES.

In seconding the resolution, Mr. Windsor said: I am here as a fisherman, and I second this resolution because I believe the Fish Regulations are ruining us. We have been fooled some way or another. I was shown a foreign order for 10,000 qtls. of fish, but the man who had it would not buy because he didn't know when he would be allowed to ship it. I saw another order for 5,000 qtls. which another buyer had, but he would not buy for the same reason, and he would give a higher price than the other man. I put it to yourselves, could you do business if someone in the same business would order you when to sell and when and how he liked and to whom he liked. Why should we be bound down to a Mr. Hawes; this man is controlling the sales in Italy, and you can't sell only through him. Why should we be ground down by such an order as this. If you could only sell through one man in St. John's, what would happen? I guess every one here knows. The proper way to handle the fish question is to let every one sell where he likes as he can sell

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where he likes in St. John's and get the highest price obtainable. Kill competition and you kill the price. Give every one a chance. We are not concerned who eats the fish or who buys it so long as the price is maintained.

FISHERMAN SIDNEY HILL MOVES SECOND RESOLUTION.

Fisherman Sidney Hill of Wesleyville, moved the second resolution. He said "It seems strange to me to be here on this occasion, when we expected so much when we started out at our annual trot this spring. A great deal has been said about the Regulations, but it is impossible to find out how they are working. If the Regulations are to be carried out at all they should be carried out properly. In places they have not been carried out at all. Why should we not be allowed to come here and sell to the Spaniards or to any other person instead of having other people buy our fish and then sell to them and make a dollar a quintal raw profit that should go to the fisherman. It is right that the merchants and buyers should make a profit, you can't expect them to sell by the loss, but the fisherman also should be considered and as the producer, given a fair price for his catch. The Regulations are not dealing properly with the fishermen and the loss is all on our side. The standardization is all right, because it asks that we make good fish, but this also has not been properly carried out as every man who has sold his fish can tell.

HENRY WHITE CONDEMS REGULATIONS.

In seconding the resolution Henry White of Loo Cove, said, "I have tried 5 merchants to-day and could not get an offer for my fish. I have walked Water Street for days trying to get a decent price for my fish or oil, but to no purpose. More than that I saw hundreds of men hanging around the wharves out of employment. What are we going to do about it? While conditions are bad now, you will see them worse later on. The North is going to be the greatest sufferer. Watch the Prospero sail every trip, and you can see her leave here without enough of freight to keep her in ballast, and if this continues is it not reasonable to think that the people of the North who will soon become isolated with ice and snow, will be short of provisions for the winter. A year ago you would want to be smart to get a parcel aboard of her. What are we going to do about it? If the Regulations are the cause, let us get rid of them. (The audience "got rid of them to-night.") I will not be surprised if some people in the North are hungry before Christmas comes, if these Regulations are not done away with and free trade opened. (Audience, "Do way with the Regulations.") We must do something. I am only a fisherman, have been at it since I was 7 years old, have been 20 years a shipper, and I am only 36. I was never in the House of Assembly to make a speaker, but when it comes to making a living for my family and I can't get it. I am forced to do something. I have a family home and I am prepared to die for them. I am going to stand out for my rights. I supported Mr. Coaker last Fall, and will support him to-morrow if he does right by the fishermen. I do not want any politics mixed in this matter at all, but I want to get a living for my family without being restricted. Seven dollars a quintal for fish is a starvation price. But even at that you can't even get an offer. What are we going to do? At \$8.00 a quintal I will sink about \$1500 on my fish. How can we live at a loss. Then let me tell you of the Inspectors under the Regulations. Why they don't know a cod-fish from a sculpin. And the Agents abroad are worse. Just think, men, we have an Agent abroad looking after our fish at \$4,000 a year, who has only just left school teaching. What does he know about fish? I don't want to knock the whole business; in certain parts the Regulations are all right. The matter of cure is all right. This year I watched my fish which was split in my schooner, saw it properly salted, washed and made, expecting as was promised last spring that we would get \$10.00 or more a quintal for it, but what do we find. I went to some merchants who told me that I would fetch \$10.00 or \$10.50 for my product only for the regulations, but we are all left. I think it is too late for us now to do much

good, we should have started when the first vessel came to St. John's. It may not be too late to accomplish something, however, if not this year, next year. When I look at Water Street and the waterfront it is with sadness. While we consider the outports our own home, we look upon St. John's as our big home, and if we don't do something the grass will be growing on Water Street sure enough. We don't want to tear down anything or tear up anyone, but we want fair play. I have 800 quintals of fish on my schooner and if I could sell it it would give a couple of days work to 20 or 30 men in St. John's and put at least some money in circulation.

FISHERMAN EDWIN WILLAR PROPOSES 3rd RESOLUTION.

Fisherman Edwin Willar of Greenspond, a man who for many years has been harvesting the sea, in a crippled condition, having had a leg amputated, moved the third resolution. He said he was a member of the Fishermen's Union for ten years, and never missed a meeting during that time. He supported the Union because he deemed it was doing good. Dealing with the resolution he said, "I am opposed to the regulations. Five years ago I had a leg amputated by Dr. Grenfell and as soon as I recovered I started fishing in a small punt. During the war when fish was high I was paid off with \$1202 for a summer's work in a three-handed boat. I invested a big lot of money in a schooner and this year I took a crew and sailed from Cape Spear to Cape Mugford in quest of a voyage. After all our efforts we only secured 230 quintals, which we brought on here for sale and started to land at Mudges. Of this 155 quintals turned out No. 1 and the balance No. 2. I asked the Inspector what he meant by culling, so much of my fish down to No. 2 and I will not tell you the answer I got. It made my blood boil and I made after him. If I had caught him I need not tell you what would have happened. If you could see the condition of my body after tramping this town carrying around a 19 pound artificial leg you would not wonder why I lost my temper with that Inspector. When I went to the Labrador I understood from Mr. Coaker's story that the price would be \$9.00 and \$10.00 for ordinary Labrador and \$12.00 for shore cure, and that the government would be at the back of these prices. Last year Mr. Coaker went over to the Fish markets and came back this spring and said the prices would be \$10.00 and \$12.00. If the fish were sold at a loss we were led to believe the government would stand the loss. The fisherman, he told us, were going to be looked after, and if any loss was met it would come out of the Minister and the Doctor and the Lawyer and the Clerk, and if we were obliged to pay \$2.00 into the revenue to meet the loss we would get \$500.00 back. Now the boot is on the other foot. I am a Union man but I don't hold with the Regulations. I would support Mr. Coaker to-day if he would treat me right. I propose that a committee of 5 wait on Mr. Coaker to-morrow about these prices.

UNION MAN CONDEMS REGULATIONS.

Aaron Burry of Greenspond, in seconding the resolution said "He was a Union man, being Deputy Chairman of the Council for 3 years. This year he was up against it and had about 45 quintals as his share of the voyage. He sold a few quintals of the fish Monday and was then told by the buyer he wanted no more. He called on the Hon. Inspector General about the cull, but he did not seem to understand him. The price and the cull was an outrage on the fisherman, and the whole thing was due to the Regulations, and I say if so let us break them. The regulations told us, said the speaker to make good fish and we did it with 800 qtls. and now we can't sell it. In Greenspond men who fitted out the smack fishermen had the fish in their stages and in their stores and could not find a purchaser because of the Regulations. What odds if a purchaser came from Baffin's Land or Jericho so long as his money was good and he wanted fish. If free trade is stopped the independent purchaser is driven out of the market; there is no competition and the producer is the victim. If we don't let the foreigner, the Spaniard, the Italian, the American and every one else come in and take our fish we will quickly find ourselves in the hole, and we are very deeply into it already. He followed the Regulations to the fullest degree. When he arrived home his crew took about 800 quintals of fish, rewashed it, dried it and cured it as well as could honestly be done. "Only to find when we reached St. John's we could not sell it, and if we could only at a price that is enough to no more than pay for the salt. This was an extra job we undertook under the Regulations."

MR. CONDON SPEAKS.

Mr. M. E. Condon was asked by the audience to address the meeting which he did briefly. The last time he spoke from the platform, he said, was at a Sealers' meeting at the request of Mr. Coaker, and as a Union man he denounced the regulations. If they were removed, he said, trade would improve, and if they never had been introduced Italy to-day would

have purchased 150,000 qtls. of the catch.

GOVERNMENT DECEPTION EXPOSED.

When the resolutions had been moved and seconded, Capt. Kean again came forward and asked the meeting if anything objectionable had been said or if any abuse had been offered, to which questions the entire audience replied "NO!" After thanking the fishermen for the splendid example set in the conduct of the meeting, he went on to deal with certain criticism of himself in the Star and Advocate which were to say the least libellous and for which the authors would likely have to appear

before the bar of justice. He then went on to quote from the Advocate of the 10th inst., an editorial headed "Coaker Policy Wins Out," which said that the fish markets were purchasing all the fish available, that no losses had been made, and that there was no need for alarm. He also quoted a letter from the Marine and Fisheries Department urging the exporters not to charter any vessels for 3 weeks, as they would not be allowed to sail, and that 200,000 quintals of Labrador fish were in the markets or afloat, and would be sufficient for 3 or 4 months. One statement was inconsistent with the other. If purchasers were not allowed to charter

ships and export, there could be no sales made locally, and the trouble to-day was that buyers were afraid to purchase and store up the fish. Allow free export and the congested would soon be relieved. The chairman then went on to deal with the personal attacks made on him by the Star and Advocate, and satisfied the fishermen that they were undeserved. When Capt. Kean resumed his seat the building shook with cheers.

IN A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE.

Mr. Samuel Collins, Hare Bay, was the next speaker, and said he believed he was present in a righteous cause.

(Continued on 11th page.)

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