

Salt Cod Deficiency Payment Program

in Newfoundland, Quebec and the maritime provinces.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, when the government announced the end of the salt rebate program last year it was supposed to be the end of the interim programs to deal with various crises facing the fishing industry. In the words of the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Jamieson) it was to be the end of the band aid philosophy. Yet here we have another interim program, another band aid. The problems facing the salt cod industry are unique, complex and stem from two factors. They are, a lack of quality control in production and the necessity for control of marketing. There is no question but that this is hurting us in our principal market in the West Indies. In my view this situation can only be coped with adequately by the establishment of a marketing board. The minister in his statement of February 20 said there was an examination into "the possible advantages of a salt cod marketing board", yet instead of an announcement in respect of this marketing board, today we have another band aid interim program. I agree that this program was necessary to correct the very serious situation that existed in 1968, when the prices were so low that the very survival of the industry was threatened, not to mention the very important aspects in relation to the hardships imposed on the fishermen, because it is the fishermen who suffer.

● (11:10 a.m.)

In this regard, in the preparation of what we hope will be the government's policy on this matter, it is necessary that steps be taken to eliminate the archaic barter system whereby a fisherman is outfitted by the merchant and repays the merchant at the end of the season from the returns from his catch. This imposes very severe hardships on the fisherman, and I hope the government will take steps to alleviate this archaic barter system, which amounts to a yoke on the fisherman, who is the producer. He has to bring in the fish and he depends on his catch for his livelihood.

In my view we should be taking greater advantage of our position to produce a top quality product, in view of the fact the fish is practically cured on the day it is caught. This gives a great advantage to Canada. Consideration should also be given to the packaging of

[Mr. Davis.]

the product for retail merchandising, thereby eliminating some of the middlemen.

Most important, Mr. Speaker, we must end the cut-throat competition that is doing so much to hurt us in respect of our principal markets. In the final analysis of course this is hurting the fishermen as well. In my view this can only be accomplished by the establishment of a marketing board. I also believe, and I think the minister shares my view, that this marketing board can be set up adequately under the Fisheries Prices Support Board by taking advantage of provincial agencies.

This important industry is today in a state of suspended animation, yet we are stuck with another interim program and faced with the prospect of having to go through the same thing next year. I have just about concluded; but on a final note I should like to state that I am very pleased to note that the government will be paying deficiency payments under this program on the basis of a target price system, thereby insuring that the minimum does not become the maximum and that the fishermen will benefit from the advantages of improved marketing conditions.

CANADA PENSION PLAN**AMENDMENT PERMITTING MENNONITES TO MAKE PAYMENTS TO ALTERNATE FUND**

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo) moved for leave to introduce Bill No. C-190, to amend the Canada Pension Plan.

Some hon. Members: Explain.

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Speaker, in the years to come, the value of government programs like the Canada Pension Plan will receive increasing support and recognition.

Although the effectiveness of such programs depends upon universal coverage and contribution, care must be taken that adequate opportunity is given to groups who, for reasons of religious beliefs cannot accept the benefits and whose non-participation in the program would not jeopardize its success, if they were to exclude themselves therefrom.

The Old Order Mennonites of Waterloo County is such a group and this bill seeks to recognize their right on religious grounds to make payments into an alternate fund equal to the amount of their Canada Pension Plan premium.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.