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The Mail and Advocate

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ST. JOHN'S, N.F.L.D., OCT. 28, 1914.

OUR POINT OF VIEW

The Sealing Commission

WE learn that the Government intends to appoint the three Judges of the Supreme Court to be a Commission to enquire into the loss of the 253 heroes who died on the ice and sank in the Southern Cross last Spring and to recommend legislation to prevent such disasters in the future.

Now we have every respect for the three Judges of the Supreme Court, but we unhesitatingly state in no way would such a Commission be qualified to deal with this matter. One legal man of course is necessary on such a Commission, but not three.

We therefore take this opportunity to inform the Premier that the F.P.U. will take no part in such an enquiry, nor will the fishermen come forward in any way to give information, if the matter is to be dealt with by the three Judges of the Supreme Court or any other Court.

The Commission must be a strong one, composed of three men—one a leading legal man, another a qualified ship builder and another a qualified sealer. Nothing short of this will suffice, and any attempt to muddle this serious life and death matter by appointing a Commission that would bring in a report which would not thoroughly go to the root of the evils and be competent to recommend drastic reforms to prevent such awful catastrophes in the future would but inflame the whole country and do more harm than any one in the Government is able to comprehend.

Pit Props

FISHERMEN are being asked to cut and rind pit props and haul them to the bank for \$3 per cord. If men work for this figure the country will be denuded of its prime timber along the coast line and the men employed will not earn enough to pay for their food. Nothing less than \$4 per cord should be accepted and no man should engage to cut this timber at less than \$4 per cord with the rind off.

The contractor who engages to procure this timber at a figure that will not permit them to pay \$4 rinded on the bank should be considered an enemy and oppressor of the people.

We advise all loggers to refuse to handle this timber unless \$4 is paid. According to offer made sometime ago the contractors are well able to pay the cutters \$4. At any lower figure the cutting of this timber would prove a curse rather than a benefit, for by cutting this timber in such large quantities the supply which is little enough for fishery purposes will be destroyed and in a few years timber in the areas where these pit props are to be cut will be as scarce as gold mines, and it will be an expensive business for the fishermen to secure their requirements.

Once the forests have been depleted by cutting a steamer load of pit props, sacrifices will have to be made for years after to provide timber supplies for the fishery—therefore, the fishermen that cut pit props for \$2 rinded on the bank, is but cutting off his right hand with his left.

Let all demand \$4 and the man that cuts at less should be publicly ex-

posed as an enemy of the country of the worse type.

Those who need pit props must be prepared to pay a decent price for the value includes the timber as well as the labor, for timber is now of considerable value to every fisherman.

The Government should fix a price of \$4 as the minimum price for pit props and thus protect the poor man's interest and ensure some return to the country for the depletion of its valuable timber.

The Price of Fish

LABRADOR fish (soft) has reached its lowest price and all buyers apparently are determined to offer \$3.50 for the balance of the voyage. A t Twillingate. Change Islands and other ports in Green Bay the planters are receiving \$3.50 cash. The Trading Co. has purchased a quantity in Green Bay which is to be shipped to Lunenburg and another cargo is being purchased in Conception Bay by the Trading Co. at the same prices for the same Canadian port, consequently very little more soft Labrador fish is to be disposed of here.

Shore fish in outports is now being eagerly purchased at \$5.75 and \$6. No more Shore fish will be sold here at less than \$6 and before the 30th of November all will be eager to purchase all available here at \$6.50.

One of the lessons taught by this year's fish buying at St. John's is the robbery practiced in what is called a West India cull. We unhesitatingly state that two-thirds of the fish taken West India this year is Maderia fish and will be packed in drums for the Brazilian market. The fishermen have been robbed of fully \$200,000 this fall on the cull. There can be no honesty in a cull that allows the buyer to do as he wishes with a seller's fish. We have seen splendid fish thrown out as West India that always in our 30 years experience of fish buying went as Maderia or Talqual.

The combine arranged this cull this season to suit their own purposes and we would today inform the Premier and the country and the world that the trade at St. John's this fall has robbed \$200,000 from the fishermen through the so-called cull of West India. We have seen this fish picked over in the stores after coming from the wharf and in many cases two-thirds of it went into drums for Brazil.

There is no one to blame but the Government. The Union members of the House of Assembly pointed those evils out time and again last winter in the House but all to no avail.

We know of buyers who ordered the cutters to recall West India fish on the wharf this Fall when complaint of unfair treatment had been made and out of about 10 or 12 culls, two quintals was actually taken back as No. 1 at a price two dollars higher than it was being taken for as cullage.

None of the Shore fish shipped here this fall fetched on an average more than \$5.50 and much of it averaged but \$5.

The fishermen's tax on Shore fish through war conditions amounts to at least \$2 per ctt. for if there was no war fish would easily be worth that much more to the producers.

Add to this tax the increased taxes on every article used by the people, the tax on flour, tea, sugar, pork, beef, kero oil, hay, &c., and it will be found that another dollar on each quintal of fish has been taken off which goes into the Government chest to be wasted and in some cases thrown away.

Yet some people who have more cheek than common sense want to know why the fishermen are not full of eagerness to enrol as soldiers or sailors to fight the Germans. No worse Germans exist than those who would rob the fishermen of \$200,000 through a cull of fish or rob another \$200,000 as a grab on flour.

There are those on Water Street today who gave large sums for the Patriotic Fund who are making \$2 per brl. profit on flour, and the fishermen don't forget those who made from \$12 to \$15 extra grab on a barrel of sugar since the war opened.

One East End firm bought 35,000 brls. of flour at \$5 and sold much of it at \$7; another West End firm bought 14,000 brls. of flour at from \$4.55 to \$5 and is selling it today at \$7.

Yet the fishermen are asked to enlist to fight Germans who some think would oppress the people of Newfoundland if the British flag was hauled down, but would the Germans oppress the people any worse than some of our Patriots are now and have been oppressing them?

Even the Government is cutting the widows' dole down to one dollar a quarter. We know of widows on the northside of Bonavista Bay who were cut from \$5 to \$2 and from \$2 to \$1 per quarter. Yesterday we published a letter from one Mrs. Howell of Fox Cove, near Newtown, wherein she states that since the war she has been cut \$2 on a dole of \$6 per quarter. At Newport an old woman who received \$2 has been cut to \$1.

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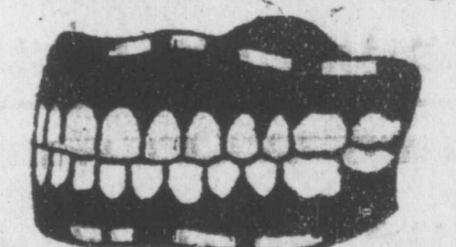
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