

Canadian Saltfish Corporation

I would like Quebec to sign as soon as possible this agreement with the federal government so that we may be of some assistance to these isolated and deprived fishermen.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the salt fish industry in the Gaspé peninsula is far ahead of that in Newfoundland or on the lower north shore. That is why the Quebec Department of Industry and Trade is not in favor of allowing the Canadian Saltfish Corporation to extend its jurisdiction to the Gaspé area. The salt fish from its waters—commonly called “Gaspé Cure”—is of a higher quality than the salt and dried cod from Newfoundland. In some countries, moreover, it is a highly appreciated food.

In spite of the high demand for “Gaspé Cure” and of the steady increase in the price of salt fish for the past ten years, the Gaspé fisherman used to get 4 cents a pound for his cod in 1960 and in 1969—

[English]

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, there must be something wrong with the translation of the hon. member's remarks since I heard something that is certainly not the fact. Let us chalk it up to the translation system, but there was something wrong with that last statement.

[Translation]

Mr. Cyr: —he received from 4½ to 5 cents a pound. The fisherman can never ask a reasonable price for his catch.

How is the price the fisherman gets for his fish set? The mechanism through which the effects of demand can bring the best results is the sale of salt fish by auction, whose advantage is to adjust prices according to the variations of supply and demand and according to the quality of the fish. Indeed, this method will be used by the Canadian Saltfish Corporation.

The Gaspé producers of salt fish are negotiating a selling price, in the spring, with the exporters and the price that will be paid to the fisherman is determined according to the terms of the contracts signed with the exporter. The producer sets the price on the domestic market in relation to the export market. The price on these two markets, minus the processing expenses and the profit of the producers represent the other elements used to set the price that is paid to the fisherman.

That is precisely the type of situation the Canadian Saltfish Corporation must remedy by deciding on a reasonable price for the

[Mr. Cyr.]

fisherman at the beginning of the fishing season. Any planning for the development of a sector of the economy must be based on existing growth tendencies.

In the Gaspé peninsula, the producers of salt fish have already started to do so; that is why I introduced in committee amendments for the recognition of salt fish producers as agents of the Canadian Saltfish Corporation.

The fisherman who sells his catch to a producer will be protected because section 24, as amended, reads as follows, and I quote:

“The Corporation may develop, establish and operate schemes for payment for cured fish and the by-products of fish curing—”

For a start, the Canadian Saltfish Corporation will attempt to recognize market tendencies to speed up the improvement and the quality of the product and new by-products.

If the Corporation is as important as we hope it will be, a gap may develop between what the market demands, not only from the point of view of quality but also from that of quantity of fish non industrial fishermen are willing to supply.

• (5:40 p.m.)

If the Gaspé area is covered, the Corporation will be able to overcome this obstacle as soon as the Gaspé salt fish producers join the plan. The Atlantic saltfish industry will then be able to acquire broader markets.

The Corporation should aim at marketing more refined saltfish by-products. It is recognized that consumers in industrialized countries buy very little saltfish in its initial condition. It is probably the reason why very few Canadians eat salt cod.

The Saltfish Corporation, in co-operation with the consumer service of the Department of Fisheries, will have to set up advertising campaigns in order to promote the sale of salt cod in Canada.

The future of this product depends more on competition with regard to its various forms than on demand alone.

Saltfish dealers and producers have never made any effort to reach the consumer. They were much too busy trying to dispose of their products on the export markets.

Mr. Speaker, with the permission of the House, I should like to table a chart regarding selling prices of Gaspé salt cod, set in December 1969, f.o.b. Gaspé, as well as the total cod catch in Quebec for the years 1967, 1968 and 1969. These data which will be recorded in