

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 20, 1951

The house met at three o'clock.

### FISHERIES

#### NEWFOUNDLAND SHORE FISHING—PRICES SUPPORT, MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT

**Hon. R. W. Mayhew (Minister of Fisheries):**

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo (Mr. Carter) asked two questions on the orders of the day, and I agreed to try to answer them today on motions; with your permission I shall do so at this time.

The first question was:

Will the minister indicate what action, if any, has been taken by the federal authorities to implement this undertaking with the Newfoundland fishermen?

The hon. member was referring to an undertaking that had been made on October 27 last with respect to shore fishing. On October 27 last I made an announcement to the fishermen of Newfoundland regarding Labrador fish. At that time the merchants would not accept this type of fish from the fishermen, and the federal government, through the prices support board, gave a guarantee to the trade that would allow them to pay fishermen \$7 per quintal on genuine Labrador fish. At the same time I announced that no immediate action was being taken on shore fish, but an assurance was given to the fishermen that we would review the shore fish situation as the marketing season advanced and as the results of the market operations became clearer. We have every intention of fulfilling this promise to make a comprehensive review of the prices paid to shore fishermen.

In reply to the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo, I am able to say that the prices support board has been making preparations to investigate the shore fish prices. Hon. members will understand that the final export price of this commodity cannot be truly determined until the end of the export season, which normally runs into June. Likewise, with the late fishing last fall the total volume of shore fish was not then known. Accordingly, as I indicated in October, we are preparing our investigation as the season advances.

For the first time in Newfoundland we hope to provide complete and accurate information with respect to prices received by the fishermen for the various grades and

sizes of shore fish. We shall ask each fisherman to provide our board, on an appropriate form, with a statement of the prices received from his merchants for the various grades and sizes. Already we have taken steps to prepare the necessary forms, to enlist the services of the dominion bureau of statistics and the post office; and already one of our accountants is in Newfoundland helping to prepare for this comprehensive survey.

This morning I received a wire from the Hon. J. R. Smallwood, premier of Newfoundland, indicating that the provincial government intends to appoint a royal commission to examine fishermen's prices in that province. This is the first intimation I have had of any such intention. I did make a commitment to the fishermen of Newfoundland last October to review the shore fish situation, a fact that was known to all in Newfoundland concerned with fisheries, and we shall proceed to make good this particular investigation. The facts provided should go far to answer the questions raised by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Browne) in the house on the 6th of February. It will be clear that I am in no way defending the prices paid by the merchants in Newfoundland to the fishermen for shore fish. Until the true facts are known, it is dangerous to draw conclusions from only a few cases, and our investigations are designed to produce these facts on a large scale.

The further question asked by the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo was:

Will the minister indicate what action the department has taken for the development of Newfoundland's fisheries?

Because so much of Newfoundland's trade is in salted fish, and because marketing problems proved difficult from 1949 onwards, it was necessary to provide some props to that trade while seeking other means to develop and modernize the fishing industry. A series of steps had to be taken to support the older salt fish branch of the Newfoundland fishery. Arrangements had to be made with the United Kingdom for the sale of Newfoundland salted cod to European markets with payments in sterling. No other Canadian industry, including the maritime salt fish trade, has such a privilege. In March, 1950, in order to relieve the surplus of Newfoundland salt fish, the federal government provided \$600,000 to UNICEF as a grant. The entire order, some 38,000 quintals, was filled