

The Address—Mr. A. W. Stuart

The fishermen whom I represent have found conditions exactly as I have described them. After three or four lean years they find it necessary to seek employment somewhere else. This is the thing that hurts. The young men upon whom we were relying to carry on in the years ahead have been obliged to leave the industry and seek employment elsewhere.

This condition is due, in many cases, to a poor catch and in other cases to prices that are below the cost of production. In the constituency I represent the sardine industry is most important. This year the catch was very small and the quality was poor. The few sardines that were caught were small and unsuitable for canning. They were sold for fertilizer and for bait. The fishermen who caught these sardines were selling them for about one-quarter of a cent per pound. It is impossible to survive and remain in an industry with prices at that level. Other branches of the industry have found conditions to be exactly the same.

It is only a short time ago that the scallop fishermen over in Digby were obliged to come ashore and take their drags out of their boats, because the price received was only about 20 cents per pound. The only hope we have now in Charlotte county at this late date, and at this season of the year, is that the lobster industry will be prosperous. I hope the lobster fishermen may be blessed with a good catch and fair prices.

The hon. member for Trinity-Conception (Mr. Stick) gave a detailed examination of the fishing industry in Newfoundland only yesterday. I believe he is to be complimented on the effort he made at that time, and I believe that he will be thanked by the fishermen down there.

But I want to take the time allotted me to speak for those I represent in this same industry. These fishermen have now had about four successive years of poor catches combined with extremely low prices. The average income of hundreds of sardine fishermen in Charlotte county and Saint John county this year would be well below \$500. In fact, taking their annual expenses into consideration their income for this year would be nil, and owing to these successive poor seasons hundreds of young men are leaving our county, not as a matter of choice but of necessity. Older residents in fishing communities are obliged to remain as it is impossible for them to secure employment and establish homes elsewhere at their age.

The three islands in my constituency, Grand Manan, Deer island, Campobello, and the coast fishing communities are in a most

[Mr. Stuart (Charlotte).]

serious position. These depressed conditions have also created a most unhappy situation among all the merchants in the county. Sales are low, collections are practically impossible, and the future is not too bright.

At this point I wish to endorse a statement made yesterday by the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), as it appears in *Hansard* for November 17, 1953, at page 103:

I make one more suggestion. When the combines investigation branch runs out of work—

And after a brief interjection he continued:—it would be a fine undertaking for it to investigate the reason for the very pronounced and, as I see it, inexcusable spread between the price the farmer receives and the price the consumer ultimately pays.

I might say too on this point that perhaps that is not the stand this particular hon. member has always taken. I remember when the amendments to the combines act were being discussed he did not take that attitude; but whether he did or not I wholeheartedly endorse the statement he made yesterday, and I believe the same statement could apply to the fishing industry. The results of such action might be of great benefit.

One of the problems the fishing industry has always had to face has been that great discrepancy between the prices paid to these primary producers and what the consumer was obliged to pay when the product was purchased from retail stores. I feel it is a field that should be carefully explored, and the information that might come from an examination of that kind would be most helpful to all primary producers. I have suggested on many occasions that this course be followed, and I hope this particular branch of the government will find time to go into this most important problem which means so much to those who are striving to make a livelihood from the sea. There are examples that I could quote that are unbelievable in regard to this discrepancy. There must be an explanation somewhere, and I am sure these producers would be pleased to have it.

On several occasions since I came here in 1945 I have gone back over the record of this industry with which I have been connected since I was 16 years old. The story should be well known by this time, and for that reason I am not going into details in the short time at my disposal. When this history is compiled and condensed, however, I believe it will be shown that fishing is the most unstable industry on this continent.

The economy of Charlotte county has always been dependent on this industry and it is, to a great extent, the barometer by