

Producer Marketing Boards Are Mooted For Fishermen

By KEN KELLY
Canadian Press Staff Writer
OTTAWA (CP)—Canadian fishermen should be enabled to form producer marketing boards to improve their bargaining position in selling to processors and distributors who exercise a measure of control over the industry, the price spreads commission proposed this week.

The royal commission, headed by Dr. Andrew Stewart, rejected in its report to the government a reorganization of the processing industry's structure in the Maritimes, saying this would be too seriously disturbing.

But it recommended passage of a federal fish marketing act "which would enable provincial governments wishing to do so to pass their own legislation, and thus to regularize the negotiation of prices to fishermen."

The report, resulting from a two-year study of the spread between the prices received by primary producers and those paid by consumers, found no evidence of excessive profits by processors or that wages were out of line with returns in comparable alternative occupations. Retail prices rose in about the same proportion as prices to fishermen.

RECOMMENDATIONS
In support of its marketing boards recommendation, it said: "The primary producers in fisheries should be given the same opportunity to organize for the purpose of participating in the determination of the price received for his product through negotiation with the buyers."

In urging that the door be opened for fish marketing boards, the report emphasized that "we would expect that there would be a public accounting of the results of the negotiations."

It also stressed that federal combines legislation and its investigation procedures would be expected to protect the public interest in the distribution practices and selling prices for fish products in the domestic market.

MORE THEORIES
The report makes four other recommendations:

1. Consideration to establishing grading systems defining sizes and condition or quality of raw fish and, where necessary, similar grade definitions for products



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processed and sold by fishermen.
2. Steps by governments concerned to correct unreliability of catch and price statistics for fish and fish products of inland fisheries.

3. Provision of information on total incomes of fishermen from all their occupations and improved statistics on the flow of aggregate gross and net incomes from fishing activities.

4. Continuation of a current program to improve statistics for Newfoundland fisheries and their integration into general fisheries statistics of Canada.

ABOUT PRICES

On the general prices situation in the 1949-58 period, it said: "Our analysis of the financial statements of firms engaged in fish processing indicates that profits have varied considerably from year to year around a level which cannot be judged excessive, and supports the contention of the industry that it has proved difficult to attract capital for new investment in the industry."

"Retail fish prices have moved upwards in about the same proportion as prices to fishermen and, in contrast to the marketing of farm products where spreads have increased more rapidly, the fisherman's share of the consumer's dollar has remained relatively constant."

"The shares to the primary producer, e.g., canned sockeye salmon 41 per cent, frozen halibut steaks 38 per cent, frozen cod fillets 29 per cent and fresh haddock fillets 22 per cent, do not seem to be out of line with the shares going to farm producers, having in mind the services rendered in the marketing system. "The pricing practices of the industry seem to be such as to result in differences in the spread in particular markets; these differences in spread are not wholly accounted for by differences in distribution costs."

HAZARD AND RISK
The fisheries experienced "acute and persistent" difficulties which gave the industry "an unusual degree of hazard and risk." With some exceptions, efforts to organize had failed to bring advances comparable to those in agriculture and other industries.

Greater productivity, bargaining power and improvement in general economic environment had brought considerable advances in the fisherman's economic position.

But in too many areas they faced "substantial problems" associated with limited and poor resources, obtaining capital, application of improved techniques, markets and marketing organization and lack of social amenities, including education. All this limited mobility.

No significant increase could be expected in Canada's current per capita fish consumption of 13 to 14 pounds a year. Nor could prices to consumers get far out of line with those of other food products.

"In the Maritime area we have... the growth of Ocean Fisheries Limited (national sea products) by acquisition of additional processing facilities and by expansion vertically into wholesale and retail establishments in the large central Canadian food market.

SMALL PART IN PRICES
In the Maritimes, fishermen's co-operatives and processing plants helped bring some stability and a added competitive

strength by offering the primary producer an alternative outlet for his product. But compared to the west coast fisherman, he "plays little part in the price determination process" and "there is substantial concentration and integration on the buyer's side." The commission had considered and rejected the possibilities of reconstituting the Maritimes processing industry to increase the number of buyers and the possibility of a smaller number of markets where fish could be sold at auction.

Power Strike Misses Goal

LONDON (AP)—A wildcat strike of power plant workers failed to black out Britain Monday.

The electricity generating board said it met all demands for supply in full and expected to do so "from now on."

The strike, not backed by the unions, was a 24-hour token stop-

Power Strike Misses Goal

page by manual workers demanding a shorter working week, a third-week's vacation with pay and a basic minimum wage of £10 a week.

But instead of the threatened walkout by some 14,000 men only 5,000 complied with the strike call.

Crisis period was late afternoon when the lights came on, electric trains start home with commuters and housewives begin cooking evening meals. But there was no interruption of service.

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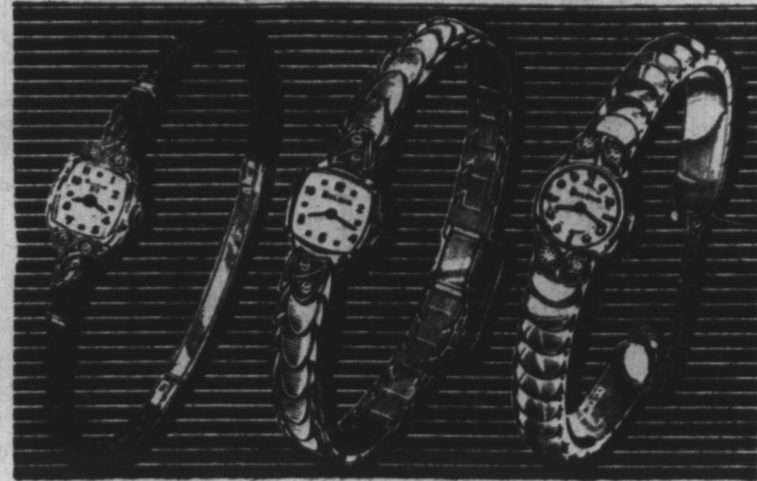
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