

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**First Session – Eleventh Legislature**

**Monday, March 28, 1949**

The Assembly met at 3:00 o'clock p.m.

**STATEMENT RE FISHING INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Mr. Brockelbank:** — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with, I should like to make a statement with regard to the fishing industry of the province.

As all here know, the whole inland fishing industry in Canada is in great difficulties due to the coming back of the salt water industry and the approach of normal conditions in other food supplies. Saskatchewan is not exception to the rule, though with all our disadvantage of distance and location of our best lakes, our fishermen are somewhat better placed than many neighbouring fishermen in the province on either side of us.

I should, therefore, like to congratulate all those who have worked so hard to achieve this and to pay a well-earned tribute to the staff of the Department of Natural Resources and the Fish Board for their good service in a very difficult task.

After very careful consideration, the government has come to the conclusion that in the face of so many adverse factors to continue to operate the Saskatchewan Fish Board as a commercial agency, attempting to buy and sell fish and to measure the results on a balance sheet, is not advisable. At this time we should remember that the prime objective of the Saskatchewan Fish Board has always been to render a service to the fishermen and to improve their economic position. The making of profits has never been an objective in this industry. The government has now decided to concentrate on the social and economic needs of those fishermen who must, of necessity, fish for a part of their living. It has now been decided to discontinue the Saskatchewan Fish Board as a commercial operation but it will continue to act as an agency of the Department of Natural Resources. The filleting and packing plants will be taken over by the Department of Natural Resources and will be kept available for the use of the fishing industry.

The government recognizes that during the past years fishing has become of considerable economic importance to a limited number of people in the province and also, because of the perishable nature of the product and the distance from the principle market, extreme difficulties confront the fishermen. The Department of Natural Resources will, therefore, increase its advisory and regulatory functions in the fisheries of Saskatchewan for the purpose of improved conservation, improved quality of product and to assist the fishermen to so organize that they will be better able to protect their interests in the marketing of fish.

In addition, the Department of Natural Resources will, in special circumstances, also guarantee a floor price to those fishermen who must fish for a living when it is economically and socially advisable to do so and, on

request of the fishermen that the department market their fish for them, the Fish Board Division of the Lake and Forest Products Corporation will act as the agent of the department in carrying out this marketing operation. The floor prices paid to the fishermen will be such that it will pay normal expenses of operation and provide a living while they are fishing. The returns from all the fish marketed will go towards paying the floor price and the expenses of marketing and any surplus will be distributed as a dividend to the fishermen. Any deficit will be paid by the Department of Natural Resources and will be reported to this Assembly by way of supplementary estimates at the next session.

Where such operations are carried on, only local fishermen will receive licences to fish and limits will be set with regard to good conservation practice and the needs of the fishermen. It is also expected that any transportation or processing necessary will be contracted.

I am pleased to announce this programme for the coming season and I hope the department will have the full co-operation of all members of this Assembly in carrying it through. The needs of the people of the north for greater incomes is evident to all. This plan can be a constructive plan for remunerative employment of some of our northern people. Needless to state, the cash income of the people in the north is only one half of their economic problem. The other half is how much in food, clothing and supplies can be bought with the dollars received for fish and furs. Therefore, the Trading Division of the Lake and Forest Products Corporation will continue to operate and to improve the six trading posts. Greater use of the Saskatchewan Fur Marketing Service will be encouraged among the trappers of the north, so as to get for them the full value of their fur.

To implement this programme, it will be necessary for officials of the department to hold meetings with fishermen at the many different lakes or settlements to explain the programme and to ascertain the wishes of the majority of fishermen at each point. I hope I can attend every such meeting held in his own constituency. I also invite the Leader of the Opposition to attend some of these meetings where the question will be discussed on its merits without any political reference.

The policy thus outlined will, of course, apply any place in the province where the required circumstances exist, but it is quite evident that fishermen on the southern lakes are in a different position from those in the far north. These fishermen could organize in co-operatives and do much more for themselves in the handling and marketing of their product. The Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Co-operation will encourage and assist this development.

I should also point out that so semblance of efficient or orderly marketing in the interest of the fishermen can be achieved by a private fish dealer, a co-operative or a government agency except they have some assurance of getting a certain volume of fish from a lake or an area. Completely unregulated and unplanned merchandising will, in all cases, ultimately damage

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the interests of the fishermen. I can emphatically state that the government has not intention of wilfully allowing such chaotic conditions to exist but will continue to plan to organize and to regulate the industry in the best interests of the fishermen.

The Assembly adjourned at 6:00 o'clock p.m.