

A better system of marketing and distributing fish would undoubtedly result in a large increase in the quantity of fish brought in by the present fishermen, for the Department has had clear evidence placed before it during the past year where fish-merchants have systematically restricted the quantities of fish they would take from fishermen; and also information from one port where the fishermen's union restricts the quantity of fish each boat is allowed to send to the local wholesale market.

I am confident, too, that the assistance which I have recommended should be given by the Government would at once result in a considerable increase in the number of men engaged in fishing. At the present time fishermen all over the Dominion are working under great difficulties, owing to the high prices they have to pay for everything they require in connection with their trade. Benzine and lubricating-oil are about double the price they were before the war. Nets and netting-twine have increased about 75 per cent., and are very difficult to procure at any price. So unless fishermen can either get a better price from the wholesale merchant for the fish, or receive some assistance from the Government, there is a risk that numbers may have to seek other employment, from which they can receive a higher and steadier income, to enable them to meet the increased cost of living.

I have, &c.,

L. F. AYSON,
Chief Inspector of Fisheries.