

While it must be admitted we do not possess the large modern trawlers used by many foreign countries, this, in itself, has not been the dominant factor in the reduction of our catch. The American fishing industry has the technical knowledge and the ingenuity to match any foreign fishing industry. Our fishermen can hold their own, and, if given a reasonable incentive, are well able to outproduce most foreign fishermen. The real issue is a lack of a constructive national policy which should recognize that the fishing industry is essential to the welfare of the country.

We have subsidized half the world with money, advice, and a most liberal tariff policy, to enable foreign producers an opportunity to sell their products on our market. We are still pursuing the same policy in direct competition with our own industry.

Because of a higher living standard, greater production cost, and, in some instances, strict conservation rules which have allowed American fishermen the use of their boats and gear on 25-30% of capacity, we have not been able to compete.

We have had plenty of fish available on the Pacific Coast and in Alaska to furnish the needs of our own market, but because of economic factors, our fishing fleet available for ground fish trawling has been kept in harbor, and the few boats operating have had limits imposed upon them. The argument that if we would produce more and sell for less, and thereby eliminate foreign competition, doesn't hold water. Over-all prices on fishery product dropped 2% in 1967—in spite of the fact that living costs as a whole increased 4.2%. Prices paid to fishermen for ground fish are much too low at the present time, and to advocate additional expenses on boats and gear to create even lower prices, might be a solution to reduce the American fishermen to a standard of living below the average of other American workers, but not a solution to increased prosperity in our industry.

The net result of our national policy, or the lack of a policy, has been that not only have we lost our market to foreign competition, but by buying these products we have indirectly subsidized and made possible for these foreign producers to greatly expand their fishing activities.

The incentives we have thus created for foreign fishery nations to earn American dollars may, in time, destroy, by over-fishing, the resources we now have in our coastal waters. The danger to the conservation of these resources is indeed a real danger, unless we can again regain our former initiative in the fishery field.

We have reached a point where a change is necessary in fishery policy presently followed by the Administration, as well as a change in top personnel now handling American fisheries.

Unless there is a change, the talk about a great future in the American fisheries is meaningless when actual facts are taken into consideration. For the reasons set forth herein, we deem the enactment of HR 17242 of primary importance, as it will enable the fishing industry to present facts and figures to warrant imposing a ceiling on imports. Present conditions in the fishing industry demand relief by setting aside a fair percentage of the American market for American fishermen, and also to further the best interests of the American public by seeing to it that, through neglect and indifference, we do not lose this industry and its capacity to provide food.

HR 17242 is essential not only to the fishing industry but other domestic industries, as well, if they are not to be destroyed by foreign imports.

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STATEMENT OF RONALD W. GREEN, COMMISSIONER, STATE OF MAINE, DEPARTMENT OF SEA AND SHORE FISHERIES

Presented herewith is a summary of conditions currently existing in Maine's commercial fishing industry, showing the impact of imports on the industry and pointing out specifically the unfair competition created by imports from nations providing extensive subsidies to their fisheries. We intend to show that a special situation has been created in the case of subsidized fisheries products, and that special protective measures are absolutely essential if our domestic industry is to survive. Proposals for such protective measures will be summarized at the conclusion of this presentation.

CURRENT CONDITIONS IN THE FISHERIES

Since early colonial days, commercial fishing has been one of the nation's basic and most important industries. It is Maine's oldest industry and has been the economic backbone of every coastal community in the state.