



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE

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New fish processing methods at sea and expanding inland markets for fresh fish are likely to lure American fishing fleets again to the once famous Grand Bank and other remote Newfoundland fishing areas soon after the war, A. W. Anderson, Chief of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Fishery Industries, reported today to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

In colonial days 90 percent of the catch of New England fishermen was salted and vessels commonly operated on the distant banks, salting their catch at sea. Since the decline of the salt fish trade and the rise of the fresh fish market, however, U. S. fishing vessels in the North Atlantic have been forced to confine their operations largely to the banks near home, from which they could deliver their catches promptly to the shore plants for processing.

Compared with scores of vessels that fished distant banks a century ago, only 3 U. S. vessels were reported as visiting the Newfoundland area in 1940, 1 in 1941, and none since that year.

The huge and relatively undeveloped market for fresh and frozen fishery products which exists in the interior of the country will compel the fleet to return to the more distant banks and their more prolific resources, according to Mr. Anderson. The disadvantages of distance and time will be eliminated, he believes, by installing freezing and refrigerating equipment on shipboard so that vessels may prepare finished fishery products at sea.

"A trend toward the performance on shipboard of certain processing functions, now carried out on shore, seems inevitable," he said. "It may follow the pattern of the large factory ships used in some of our other fisheries, like the floating salmon and crab canneries on the Pacific coast, California tuna clippers have long frozen their catches taken off Latin America.

"Perhaps the latest development of this nature is the 67-foot Pacific coast fishing craft SOUFFIN which is equipped with freezing and refrigeration facilities. It made several otter trawling trips during 1943, during which a portion of the catch was filleted and frozen while at sea. If filleting, freezing, and storing the catch can be successfully accomplished on this small vessel, surely it indicates that similar ventures, possibly on a much larger scale, are certain to be carried out in the Western North Atlantic in the early part of the post-war period."

The processing of frozen fish on the North Atlantic banks has already been successfully carried out by other nations. About 10 years ago a large French trawler, equipped for freezing and refrigerating fish, visited New England. In 1940 a large Italian trawler operated on the Grand Bank, processing its catch on the grounds.

Floating factories have long been used in the whale fisheries by various nations, and before the war the Japanese operated floating crab canneries off Alaska, catching and processing the giant king crab which is now being caught by American fishermen.

Improvement in the motive power, range, and handling qualities of fishing vessels is also expected soon after the war, along with "startling improvements" in auxiliary equipment, such as the installation of listening and other detecting devices to locate schools of fish.

Technological developments already introduced in the New England fisheries, especially during the past 25 years, have had far-reaching effects on the industry. Among these are the substitution of the otter trawl for the old fashioned hand and trawl lines, the equipment of vessels with fathometers and radio telephones, and the introduction of filleting and new freezing processes. As a result of these improvements entirely new fisheries, such as that for rosefish, have grown up, production of frozen fish in the New England States has increased from 22 million pounds in 1924 to 118 million in 1942, and production of packaged fish from a few thousand pounds in 1921, when filleting was introduced, to 122 million pounds in 1942.