

## SEAL FISHERY MEETING

The recent meeting in Ottawa on Atlantic coast sealing was attended by the Minister of Fisheries, Mr. H.J. Robichaud, in addition to representatives from the federal Department of Fisheries at Ottawa, Halifax (Nova Scotia) and St. John's (Newfoundland), delegates attended representing the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the St. John's SPCA, the New Brunswick SPCA, the Ontario Humane Society, the Canadian Audubon Society, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, sealing ship and aircraft operators, the Newfoundland Federation of Fishermen representing sealers, and the Province of Quebec.

Mr. Robichaud opened the meeting with the following remarks:

I find it most commendable that so many of you have accepted the invitation to attend this meeting. I have had many manifestations of your interest in Atlantic sealing operations and your attendance here today is a further indication of the importance that this subject holds for you.

May I suggest that you, on the other hand, regard this occasion as evidence of the continuing grave concern that the officials of my Department and I attach to the conservation of the harp and hood seal stocks of the Northwest Atlantic and to the development of the most suitable, humane methods for harvesting them. I say *continuing* because, as you are aware, beginning with the 1965 season and again in 1966, we have introduced regulations designed to achieve both of these goals.

### HUMANE SOCIETY OBSERVERS WELCOMED

From the outset, in studying and formulating more effective and practical control measures for the seal fishery, we have acted in consultation with representatives of the industry and of human and conservation groups. We have not only co-operated but, indeed, have taken the initiative in inviting qualified representatives to observe sealing operations at the ice-fields and have provided the facilities to make this possible. While in some cases the arrangements may not have been completely up to your expectations, yet I think you will agree that, under the prevailing circumstances, no effort was spared to assist you, in the way of material and personnel, in carrying out your observations. We have also provided you with all the information at our disposal to assist you in your own assessment of the operations.

We have done these things not only to ensure your being completely cognizant of all facets of the sealing operations but also to benefit from your knowledge and views. Your representations and advice receive very careful consideration and, in fact, are a valuable supplement to the information compiled by our scientists from their studies of the Atlantic seal herds in the past 20 years as well as the knowledge and experience of our fisheries protection officers and administrators.

Earlier this year, in the House of Commons, I stated that, to assure those who have expressed

concern about the sealing operations, additional steps were to be taken to improve the enforcement procedures and even more fishery officers would be at the scene of operations during next season to ensure that regulations were obeyed. I added that it was my intention to arrange further visits to the ice in 1967 of representatives of humane societies and associated agencies, and to have more consultation with them in a continuing effort to see that the most humane methods possible were used.

This meeting is the fulfilment of that statement, and I can assure you that your views will again be taken into account along with those of our own departmental officers in formulating new measures to make sealing operations as humane as they can possibly be.

### SEAL HUNT TO CONTINUE

Another statement which I made a short while ago in the House was to the effect that at no time would I consider cancelling seal hunting altogether because it is necessary and has to be carried on. I mention this statement now so that you may be fully aware of the course we shall pursue. I would ask you to bear this in mind in making your representations so that the meeting can give adequate consideration to improving control measures on operations to ensure the most effective conservation and human practices. This is our aim; it is our objective.

At today's meeting we have invited representatives not only of humane societies and associated agencies, but we have here also representatives of the industry, including operators and fishermen. If we are to proceed with the implementation of adequate regulations in order to assure full protection and control of sealing operations, we need the full co-operation of all concerned.

### GRATITUDE MIXED WITH REGRET

I am personally deeply grateful for the expressions of good understanding and the attitude taken so far by most of the representatives of the SPCA and other humane societies who have acted as responsible citizens fully aware of the problems we have to meet in dealing with a situation so complicated and involving such personal emotion. It is with regret that I must deplore the position taken by a few who, by their lack of understanding of the situation and of the problems involved, are using their position of their connection with certain societies to create unwarranted objections to an operation which must be allowed to proceed in the best interest of the area affected.

Certain statements made in relation to this operation have been most irresponsible and have been damaging to the image of Canada here and abroad. I shall not mention names, but certain articles have been unfair, untrue and do not represent the facts.

I admit that there have been abuses. There has been evidence of undue cruelty in some cases, and it is our duty and responsibility to put a stop at once to such abuses and to enforce methods of killing that will prevent any attempt of cruelty in the sealing operation.