

*Fisheries Act*

in their opinion, the net result of such legislation would mean complete disaster to the lobster industry?

Would you not also agree, Sir, that since you are an elected representative of the people, that you should represent, and hear, all of the people involved?

I will not read the rest of the letter. I have tried to get the fisheries committee to meet to discuss this problem. I have done everything I can under the rules, but I have been prevented because the committee will not go back to this bill unless it has a reference from the House of Commons.

I have an assurance in a letter from the minister that he will not do anything to change the regulations before he has heard from the fishermen. I hope the minister will meet with the fishermen as soon as possible. I hope the fishermen will be able to come before the committee next fall to air their views. The minister wrote a letter to me on June 17 in which he stated:

—we certainly do not intend to introduce any amendments to permit the new fishery.

Later on, in a letter he wrote on June 22, the minister said:

—I would propose that no action be taken by the Department of Fisheries, either to draw up regulations or consider licences for a possible far offshore lobster fishery until meetings are held with fishermen, either with myself in Ottawa or with senior members of the departmental staff in the fishing communities.

I know the minister is an honourable man, and I am sure he will not do anything until that has been done. The only difference between what the minister is saying, and what I am saying, is that right now there is a law which protects the fishermen. Perhaps the minister can correct me if I am wrong. The minister is suggesting now that he or his department will decide on regulations and Parliament will have no say in this whatsoever. He suggests the law will be changed because this is just a matter of passing new regulations. The fishermen are protected at this time by the law.

Perhaps the minister will say that there was another meeting held by the fishermen at which some of them disagreed. They did not disagree in respect of this particular problem. They did disagree about some of the regulations the department is putting out. They disagreed with the suggestion that the same lobster regulations should apply to one area of my riding as apply to the rest of Nova Scotia in district no. 4. This is a particular problem in respect of which I think they all

[Mr. Comeau.]

agreed. I do not wish to go into the whole subject, but the fishing industry is the backbone of the Atlantic provinces, particularly the lobster industry. This is tremendously important to my part of the country. It involves millions of dollars. The government must be very careful when changing the regulations in the lobster fishery as many problems must be ironed out.

There is a limited number of boats now available to this industry. This is another problem that must be ironed out. It must be approached in the same way as the problem of boats for the salmon fishery on the west coast was approached. These things must be considered by the committee, and it is imperative that the government be careful in respect of these regulations. Every time someone mentions the word "fish" someone else hollers that it is a dirty, smelly word. It is time this industry was recognized as something other than a dirty, smelly industry in Canada. If people in the rest of Canada, other than the Atlantic provinces, were as concerned about fish as they are about other problems we might today have policies which would accomplish exactly what the fishermen want. We might then not have the people in Upper Canada referring to the fishermen in the Atlantic provinces as dirty, smelly people.

● (2:50 p.m.)

This is the main thing. If we could get the people in the rest of Canada to accept the word "fish" this problem would be solved. This matter does not bother them. They say that a great deal of money is being poured into eastern Canada and then ask what the people are doing with it. The fishermen are trying to feed the rest of the country. They are not causing any harm. They provide food also for the people of other nations. This is an honourable profession, although it is one in which none of us would like to be involved. Many things involve the Canadian fisherman.

One example is the problem in connection with getting wharves built. Last week a wharf collapsed and a fellow fell through to the bottom of the harbour. Now, this wharf is sealed off and there is no activity there, although it is located in an export Port. These are the types of things the fishermen have trouble getting through to the rest of the people. If this could be done, then I believe the government would act. Perhaps it is because there are two ministers concerned about these problems, the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry and the Minister of Public