

Supply—Fisheries and Forestry

inexhaustible. That is not the case. It has been incontestably proven, I think, that some of the most valuable coastal and ocean fisheries are susceptible to depletion because of over fishing. This is particularly true with respect to lobster fishing off the Atlantic coast.

I want to congratulate the department on its initiative in instituting a lobster trap limit in district 7B. This limit is presently fixed at 500 traps per boat and seems to be working out quite well. I believe fishermen are finding that their capital investment is very much less, and that they are making just as much money with considerably less expenditure. I would warn the minister however that this conservation measure, this trap limit, will not be entirely successful unless it continues to be accompanied by a corresponding restriction on the number of lobster fishing licences issued.

A program along these lines was tried last season, and though satisfactory to a point it was not entirely successful because of political interference with the decisions that were handed down by the board which had been set up to decide who should receive licences. This board, which was comprised of at least one departmental official and a number of men drawn from the fishing industry, tried to do a good job. They met and considered the applications which were placed before them, and then they rendered their decision.

However the regulations provide for an appeal to the minister from the decision of the board. I find no fault with this right of appeal; in fact I think it is a necessary precaution because there may very well be extenuating circumstances unknown to the board which, when made known to the minister, could cause him in all fairness to reverse the board's decision.

Last year, just about the time when the decisions of the board were being handed down, a federal election was called, and this was when the matter got entirely out of hand. May I inform this committee without fear of contradiction that political influence was used in some cases in granting licences to men whose applications had been refused by the board, and who in actual fact had no real right to a lobster fishing licence.

This is unfortunate. It is unfortunate for the present minister, because I do not know how in the world he will ever get that regulation back on the rails. Men who apply this year and who are turned down will, I am

afraid, cite to the minister cases almost parallel with theirs where last year licences were granted. It is unfortunate, as I say, that this interference was allowed to take place. However, it did, and I certainly hope that the minister will not allow anything like that to influence him this year when appeals are directed to him.

It is also important that this board which hears these applications be set up immediately. It is not fair to keep these fishermen waiting until perhaps mid-April before they are told whether they are going to get a licence to fish. Applications should be heard just as quickly as possible and a decision rendered, so that men who plan on entering the industry may make the necessary preparations. In many cases these men who plan on entering the lobster fishing industry have to buy equipment, they have to buy boats and they have to buy other gear. Naturally they do not want to make this investment until they know for sure whether or not they are going to get a licence to fish. If, as was the case last year with some applications, these decisions are allowed to lag until the middle of April or even later, then this just does not give them time to get ready for the opening of the season.

There is one other phase of the industry with which I should like to deal briefly, and this is the Irish moss industry. The harvesting of Irish moss is rapidly becoming a very important industry on Canada's Atlantic coast. In the past 25 years the harvest of Irish moss has grown from about 1.5 million pounds worth \$30,000 to last year's 79 million pounds worth over \$2 million.

To give you an idea, Mr. Chairman, how valuable an industry this is, during one week in July of this year two families working in an area in my own province harvested moss worth \$1,000 to each family. Several other families earned about \$600 per family, and I have known as many as 20 boats to average as much as \$40 each per day. This moss is harvested mostly by hand and is picked off the shore where it is tossed up by the storms. As a result of this method of harvesting, very little capital investment is necessary.

The moss is also raked sometimes from the rocks, and it is in connection with this operation of raking that I think some experimental work should be done by the Department of Fisheries, or by some other department of government, to make sure that the moss industry is conserved. There is a feeling among those who are engaged in the industry that this raking process may damage the roots