

Supply—Fisheries

one way or another may perhaps prove to be very important. Nevertheless I would like to emphasize once again that there is a growing impatience that this matter has not been brought to a conclusion, and I think the minister can well understand the feelings of the organizations representing the fishermen in regard to this problem. We can well understand the feelings of those engaged in the industry in asking when this matter will be brought to a conclusion and when Canada will indicate its position in a definite and conclusive manner. I urge the minister, in his continuing conversations and discussions with other parties, to keep in mind the fact that the time will come in the very near future when this matter will have to be resolved conclusively.

Another matter briefly raised by the previous speaker concerns the seal hunt in the gulf of St. Lawrence. I suppose all of us have received copies of the document to which he has referred. I am deeply perturbed about the conditions that had been brought to light. On the occasions when this matter was raised in the house the minister assured us that every endeavour was being made to eliminate the cruel practices used in the annual slaughter of seals, and I believe he was sincere in making those statements.

• (1:00 p.m.)

We understand also that he was on the scene personally for a day at least, if not more. Possibly while he was there the customary conventions were observed and he did not see anything too much out of the way. Apparently those who went incognito had an opportunity to observe the practices being followed and saw things entirely differently. The stories are certainly different, which does little to allay the fears and anxieties of a great many people across the country who are vitally concerned about the methods used in the annual slaughter of baby seals.

Mr. Robichaud: These stories are not factual; they are not exactly according to the facts but are exaggerated.

Mr. Patterson: If the stories are not factual, then perhaps there should be some way by which those who have written them can be brought to task and required to give an explanation. The stories, coupled with the pictures on television, are having an influence on the thinking of the people. If they are not correct and are being spread abroad for ulterior reasons, there should be some way of

[Mr. Patterson.]

bringing the true facts to the attention of the people.

There is one other matter to which I should like to refer. I raised it on orders of the day yesterday, as reported on page 8902 of *Hansard*. I asked the following question and I quote:

In view of the economic hardship imposed on Fraser Valley gill net fishermen, would the minister reconsider the decision resulting in the closure of the Fraser river for the balance of the season?

The Minister of Fisheries replied as follows:

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the salmon season in British Columbia this year has been excellent, one of the best, if not the best, in decades. However, there is need for conservation, particularly in the case of certain runs of salmon frequenting the Fraser river. I expect to be on the west coast this week end and I will discuss this matter with our area director there.

I appreciate the reply given by the minister to this question. He pointed out that the salmon season in British Columbia has been excellent. I regret to say that so far as the gill net fishermen are concerned they are not benefiting too much from this fact. This is one of the reasons I raised the question. The minister made reference to the need for conservation. I think the gill net fishermen on the Fraser river are well aware of the salmon conservation measures, and I believe they have co-operated to the full when the regulations were imposed and they felt there was a need for them.

On the other hand, we can understand the feelings of these fishermen when they do everything they possibly can to assist in the conservation of salmon resources but are denied the opportunity of harvesting these resources in order to provide for their families. After all, these men are bona fide fishermen. They make a living from this industry. Yet because of the closure methods they are unable to provide for themselves and find themselves in severe financial conditions.

I believe, therefore, that this matter should be given very careful consideration. I am not saying that closure periods are not necessary. I believe they are. The fishermen realize they are. However, in some instances I believe these regulations are carried to the extreme and to the detriment of the interests of those engaged in the fishing industry. Therefore I request that the minister when he is on the west coast investigate the matter and give consideration to the needs of those who are experiencing hardship as a result of the closure of this river to the gill net fishermen.