

Supply—Fisheries

"Fish (Salmon) Management, by A. G. Huntsman". He is referring to the low catches of salmon in particular in Shubenacadie lake in Nova Scotia. This is what he says:

Apart from this, the stock of fish may be low, since natural stocks of salmon in southern waters both in Europe and North America have been lower during the past decade than ever before known.

That again is a very serious matter. I appreciate that the fisheries board have been taking a number of steps by way of distributing young salmon, but I believe they have to go further to the root of this matter and try to take care of it in a natural way. The suggestion I made before—I do not know whether the minister approved of it, but I am going to make it again—is in this form. I suggest that he take a river, particularly a river such as the Gander river in Newfoundland, and I suggest it for two or three reasons. It is a large river and covers a large stock of salmon. It is intensively fished by sportsmen and tourists. The approaches to that river are quite narrow, and very easily overseen. There probably would be about twenty fishermen fishing at the approaches to the river—I mean commercial fishermen. They take a very large amount of salmon. I feel, Mr. Chairman, it would be much cheaper for the department to subsidize these fishermen not to catch fish than it would be to operate a fish hatchery. It would be well worth the experiment for a year or two at the very most. Over three or four years you may have to pay a man the average value of his salmon catch. It might be about \$400 per person per year, but I doubt very much whether it would go beyond that. The hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay would be in a better position to describe the actual amount than I am, but I believe that would be the figure. If we say there are twenty of those fishermen at \$400 each, that would be a very small amount indeed to pay for an experiment of this type. I would heartily recommend it to the minister for his serious consideration.

Another angle in connection with salmon conservation results is dealt with in the report from which I previously quoted at page 42. Mr. Huntsman is referring to young salmon and he says:

It may be possible to increase the numbers of native smolt—

As the minister knows and I imagine hon. members know the "smolt" is a young salmon, the next degree to a parr.

—that descend from the streams, by largely eliminating the eels that prey extensively on the parr in the streams. It is now concluded that there is no likelihood of selling the eels to offset part of the cost of capture.

[Mr. Higgins.]

Consequently, simple and cheap methods of catching and using them on the spot to enrich the comparatively barren streams are being sought. This is to convert the parr's enemy into fertilizer to increase its food.

I think that is a suggestion that is well worthy of consideration because, as the minister and his associates well know, one of the greatest enemies that the salmon has is this particular type of eel that attacks not only the mature salmon itself but the young parr and the young smolt in great numbers indeed. If some scheme could be worked out whereby these eels can be caught and made into fertilizer to enrich the streams, I think that would be a wonderful way indeed to handle the problem.

I have only one more general observation to make before I can get down to some problems that I want to put to the minister. As he himself outlined some time ago on three or four occasions, I believe, Canadians eat annually approximately ten pounds of fish per person as compared with a per capita consumption of 45 pounds annually by Europeans. That, Mr. Chairman, is just about the ratio in which fisheries problems rate with the government of this country as compared, we will say, with those of agriculture.

The fishing industry is the oldest North American industry, but the past century has shown a marked contrast in the development of fisheries and the development of agriculture in this country. As we all appreciate, agriculture has a huge national effort behind it. All we have to do is to look at the expenditures of the Department of Agriculture, and these various services—the experimental farms and the illustration stations—and we can see the truth of that statement borne out. But when we look at the fisheries, what do we find? It is the neglected stepchild of the government, unwanted and unloved. I will concede, of course, in all honesty and sincerity, that under the present minister and his department great steps indeed have been made with regard to the outlook for the fisheries and in the interest that is being shown in them by members of this parliament. Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, the fisheries are not receiving the treatment they should receive from this dominion. As I say, I appreciate the work the minister and his associates have done but it seems to me that it is going to be a long haul before the fisheries are put in their proper position.

One of the great problems of the industry is one that the minister has been stressing on more than one occasion, namely the problem of conservation. I have already referred