

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 7, 1971

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

TABLING OF AGENDA

[Translation]

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41(2), I should like to table the agenda for the Constitutional Conference to be held June 14, 15 and 16 at Victoria.

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● (11:10 a.m.)

[English]

FISHERIES

STATEMENT ON ATLANTIC SALMON FISHERY AND LIMITATION AGREED TO BY DENMARK

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Mr. Speaker, the Atlantic salmon fishery, as many hon. members know, is in difficulty. Stocks have been declining for many years and pollution, together with overfishing for this unique species, has caused the Canadian government to introduce special measures for the protection of salmon runs on Canada's east coast.

One of the causes for a decline in stocks has been increased catches by foreign nationals. The development of a major commercial fishery off the west coast of Greenland is a case in point. Beginning in the early 1960's, and with increased effort through to 1969, fishermen from Denmark, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Greenland itself took large quantities of Atlantic salmon many of which originated in this country.

The highest reported catch of Atlantic salmon off west Greenland was in excess of 2,000 metric tons in 1969. This was equivalent, in that year, to the total Canadian commercial catch on the east coast of Canada.

The Canadian government has protested this increase in fishing for Atlantic salmon. It made its views known both to the individual countries involved and at the annual meetings of the International Commission for Northwest Atlantic Fisheries.

This summer, for the first time, a limit will be placed on the total fishing effort by Denmark. It has agreed, officially, to limit the number of vessels involved to that reached in 1969. This is the official position of the Danish government. However, it should be noted that the total

number of Danish vessels engaged in the Atlantic salmon fishery off Greenland fell from 15 to 13 in 1970. The forecast for 1971 is now a maximum of ten, three of the largest vessels which previously engaged in this fishery now having been converted to other fisheries.

When I was in Denmark last week, the Danish Minister of Fisheries, who is also the Minister for Greenland, told me that his government was concerned about the supply of Atlantic salmon and was adopting three measures which, taken together, could affect the size of the Danish fishing fleet in future years. They are: 1. The introduction of a tax on the quantity of salmon caught; 2. Government loans to enable salmon fishing vessel owners to convert to the taking of other species such as sharks and shrimps; 3. The launching of a special research program, aimed at discovering additional species which could be taken by these vessels in other waters.

I therefore expect that the Danish catch, off west Greenland, will decline. I expect that the catch by the Norwegians and also by the Faroese will decline. They will decline, also, because salmon quotas off Norway, in the northeast Atlantic, are being reduced and vessels which, until recently, have participated in both the northeast Atlantic fishery and off Greenland now have a much shorter season in which to try to recover their costs.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that developments with respect to the Common Market could largely eliminate our problem. If Denmark follows the United Kingdom and joins the European Common Market its commercial fishermen will no longer be able to operate within the 12-mile limit off west Greenland. The same applies to Norway and the Faroese. The west Greenland inshore fishery, in other words, will be reserved mainly for the native peoples living in Greenland. And if we succeed in getting the United Nations to accept a high seas ban for salmon fishing at the Law of the Sea Conference in 1973, then the only Canadian salmon taken off west Greenland will be caught within 12 miles of Greenland itself.

I do not wish to imply, Mr. Speaker, that all our problems are solved. The Danes, like the Norwegians and the Faroese, will continue to fish off west Greenland in 1972 and 1973. Denmark, officially, is also holding its 1969 level of effort. However, as I said earlier, the forecast is for a reduction in vessels making the trip to west Greenland and the offshore catch of Canadian salmon should be reduced accordingly.

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House welcome the announcement made this morning by the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry with regard to efforts that have been made to conserve Atlantic salmon.

I should first like to thank the minister for the courtesy he extended to the official opposition by delivering a