

Supply—Fisheries

stead of only two days. Salmon is caught within one or two miles of my home, and I have had occasion frequently to visit salmon stands, especially those stands which are held by poles and not weights, as we have in some sections of the bay. Besides, the fishermen are often required to have their nets out of order for two or three days during the week, because the regulations provide that if nets cannot be put out of fishing gear on Saturday night and be left out for two days, then on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday the fishermen shall put them out of fishing gear to make up for the two days lost between Saturday and Monday. According to the fishermen in my locality such a regulation is impracticable and cannot be complied with, and to insist upon it would simply drive them out of business. It is for that reason I appeal to-night to the minister to go carefully into the matter. I understand that this is regarded as one method of allowing the salmon to have free access to the spawning grounds. Nobody wishes more than myself to see the salmon given sufficient access to their spawning grounds, but the protection afforded to the salmon for that purpose in connection with the fishing nets along the shore is not carried out in relation to the spawning grounds themselves. It may be said that drift net fishermen have caused a great deal of destruction of the salmon on the way to the spawning ground, and to some extent that is said also of the net fishermen along the shores of the bays and in the rivers. I am told that this argument is based on scientific research. I hold in my hand a book on scientific research, "A Survey of Salmon Fisheries in Eastern Canada," by W. L. Calderwood. I have also another book written by two professors, "A Report on Salmon Fisheries of the Baie des Chaleurs and Adjacent Waters," by Earle B. Phelps, of Columbia university, and L. Belding of Boston. The minister was kind enough to pass me these two books and told me if I made a study of them he was sure I would be convinced that stringent regulations were necessary. I have gone through them and studied them carefully. In one of them I find the following report:

On the other hand our scientific knowledge of the conditions upon which the productivity of the salmon in Canadian waters depends is far too meagre to permit of any definite statement concerning the quantitative effect of any given catch by the drifters or others upon the river stocks.

The report continues:

The present governmental restrictions limiting the fishing to certain areas to five nights of the week during the season, May 15 to August 1, and to nets of specified dimensions,
[Mr. Veniot.]

is admitted by dominion officials to represent their best judgment in the absence of scientific data. In particular, information has therefore been entirely lacking as to the actual course of migration of fish on their way to the various rivers. In fact, some doubt has been expressed by certain students of this problem as to whether the fish taken in the drift nets are actually migrating to the rivers for the purpose of reproduction or whether they are really in their open-sea environment.

That being the case, how can the department issue regulations based upon that knowledge and that research for the purpose of putting out of gear the nets along the shore and in our rivers? I think the department ought to hesitate until they have further knowledge on which to base such strict regulations. The minister must not forget that there are hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in this industry by our own people, and such regulations as these, especially the regulation which forces them to place their nets out of gear in the manner I have described, will drive our people out of business. If in order to protect the salmon spawning grounds strict regulations must be enforced, then I would advise the departmental officials to see that strangers coming into the country strictly observe the laws in connection with the spawning grounds, because these men make their camps within a gunshot of those grounds. It may be argued that the salmon rivers leased for sporting purposes are well guarded. That is true. I do not believe that there are better fish wardens and guardians in any part of the dominion than on the upper stretches of the Miramichi, and Restigouche, and the Nipisquit and Tetagouche or Middle rivers. But there is the place where the greatest care should be exercised, and a limit imposed on the number of salmon caught by those anglers. If in order to make sport more "sporty"—if I may use the word—for these men during their week or ten days fishing, we must enact regulations to put our own people out of business, then it is time a very searching inquiry should be made.

I know another argument will be used, that the drift salmon fishermen are increasing almost without limit, as are their boats and the size of their nets. But I understand the net fishermen under those regulations are allowed to operate only within a certain number of miles of the mouth of the bay. It will be pointed out that owing to this fishing by drifters, as well as by the shore-net men, the salmon have been depleted in the rivers. I have here a table extracted from one of the books loaned me by the minister, giving the number of boats using drift nets for the years 1922 to 1930. This is the table: