

CANADA'S QUEEN CRAB

The rapid expansion of the Atlantic queen crab industry has been hailed as an achievement without parallel in Canada's fishing history. "A real success story" was how federal Fisheries and Forestry Minister Jack Davis described it in the House of Commons recently.

There are now 20 new plants processing this highly-marketable crustacean, caught mostly in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the east coast of Newfoundland. These establishments employ some 700 on-shore workers whose annual earnings amount to several millions of dollars.

And yet four years ago, the queen (or spider) crab was regarded as little more than a pest with the annoying habit of stealing lobster bait and fouling fishermen's nets. In 1965 the catch was negligible; in 1967 landings of 1.5 million pounds were recorded; and in 1968 the total catch rocketed to 10 million pounds.

Experimental processing of queen crab, in which the federal Department of Fisheries has played a leading role, has led to the designing of specialized equipment for use in the new plants as well as recommendations as to the layout of the plants themselves. The accompanying photographs, taken at a plant in Hant's Harbour, Newfoundland, depict a fairly typical production set-up.



These workers, known as "shakers", are separating crab meat from the shell.



Live queen crabs are scooped from holding tanks into a wheelcart for transfer to the processing plant.