

Supply—Fisheries

The ridiculousness of the scheme—not that the scheme itself was ridiculous—but the ridiculousness of the thought that the salmon industry will not be hurt by the diversion of waters from the Columbia into the Fraser and that they would not be disturbed is quite apparent, as was pointed out by Dr. Royal when he was before our committee last year. Certainly before any scheme is carried forward with respect to development of the Columbia river to divert any of the excess water we might have into the Fraser river and then utilizing it there, this matter should be given very close attention and I am sure it will be found that nothing but harm could come from the carrying out of such a proposal. I am sure we would be branded as wasters of food of all time if we were to permit such a scheme. We would be depriving generations to come of the privilege of enjoying the fruits of the fishing industry which they would have a right to expect to inherit from us. That, of course, is a most important factor.

There is another question with which the hon. member for Fraser Valley dealt and with respect to which I would like to conclude my remarks. That is the question of the re-opening to fishing the district from the Pattullo bridge or the New Westminster bridge to the Mission bridge. This question was raised in the first instance early in 1954, I believe, when it was first indicated that the department intended to close the district to fishing. After that it was changed to closure in progressive stages but today it has reached the point where it has been made practically uneconomical for fishermen along the Fraser river in that area to try to carry on. Perhaps that is a desirable result—I am not sure that it is. The former minister of fisheries told us that the quality of the fish was one factor to be taken into consideration in closing an area. The fishermen in that region have always argued that the quality of the fish was no worse than that of fish which might be caught elsewhere.

Because my time is limited I would merely direct the attention of the Minister of Fisheries to the remarks in the marine and fisheries committee report for 1957, at page 33. After considerable questioning between the hon. member for Fraser Valley and Mr. Pritchard in regard to this matter, it was pointed out that the salmon which are caught in the Fraser river have been good and in past years have been of grade A standard. They have been accepted as such by the laboratories and graded as such by our food officials. We therefore see no reason why we should deprive the fishermen in that area from carrying on that industry which is a natural one for them; namely fishing on the Fraser river by means of gill nets.

The fish do not show the deterioration that one might normally expect. Perhaps one reason for this is that the canneries are so close to the fishermen and so there is no delay in taking the fish out of the gill net and getting it to the cannery—much more rapidly than would otherwise be the case. Therefore the fishermen in the Fraser river feel they are being deprived of their means of livelihood without due cause.

Another factor which has been mentioned is that closure is the simplest and best way to conserve the salmon. I find the international sockeye salmon commission has built up our sockeye salmon run very simply by conservation and by means of closure from time to time on the Fraser. Since they have been in charge they have been able to build our sockeye industry into the great industry it is today. We must also remember that the industry had fallen into a very serious state where at one time it was felt that we might lose our whole sockeye industry but, largely due to the effectiveness of the regulations enforced in that region by the commission, they have been able to build up the Canadian sockeye industry. They did that by allowing, not disallowing, fishing on the Fraser river by these gill net fishermen.

I feel, as does the hon. member for Fraser Valley and the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond—I am sure the hon. member for Vancouver South will feel the same way as he has some of these fishermen in his area—that to close the fishing in the area from the Pattullo bridge to the Mission bridge at certain times is to force these fishermen to do their fishing down the river. Of course we then have twice as many fishermen down river as would normally be the case which means the fish there have that much less chance to escape.

I thank the committee for its attention.

Mr. MacLean: As hon. members of the committee, one after another, have commenced their remarks I have been repeatedly reminded of the custom which I believe is attributed to Genghis Khan. He had a habit I understand, of feeding his intended victims a royal banquet before having them led out to be decapitated. As the debate went on, however, I realized that this thought was quite unworthy of what hon. members were saying, because it was obvious that they had good wishes toward me, that their congratulations were sincere, and that they approached these problems with the interest of the fishing industry primarily uppermost in their minds.

Some questions were raised by members of the committee which I intend to deal with briefly at this point. Later on, further answers may be given with regard to the various