

Supply—Fisheries

the first time that he visited Newfoundland. I believe he realizes the difficulties that fishermen in our part of the country have to face. When we see farmers from Saskatchewan getting up to speak in this house people say: "We are going to hear about wheat", and people are a bit bored hearing about wheat. When a member from Newfoundland gets up people say: "We are going to hear about fish," and I think people are even more bored hearing about fish. There is a big difference between the discussion of wheat and the discussion of fish. The people who grow wheat seem to make fortunes but the people who catch fish always seem to be in difficulties.

Mr. Sinnott: You never grew any wheat.

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): The fisherman very seldom becomes a wealthy man whereas the farmer very often seems to be surrounded with luxury. I do not intend to cast any reflection on the wheat farmers, but I do want to get the minister to maintain the good will that he has towards fishermen, especially the fishermen of Newfoundland who during the past year and a half have had such a hard time.

The minister was talking about seal fishery. I am not sure that I caught all his remarks correctly, but as I understood him he said that the Norwegian sealers were killing seals only a day old, and he was not satisfied that the Newfoundland fishermen had not been doing the same thing, that we had to have our own skirts clear before we could make any complaint about the conduct of the Norwegian sealers. He also made the remark that, so far as conservation is concerned, it did not matter whether the seal was killed when a day old or a month old, or words to that effect. Sir, it does, and I interjected to that effect when he was speaking. It makes a big difference because of the number of seals which the vessel can take.

The seal grows very rapidly, about two or two and a half pounds a day, so that a seal that is two weeks old weighs about twenty-eight pounds. I am not exactly sure of the number of pounds, but it has been the practice in our country for at least thirty-five years to have a date set when the sealers are allowed to leave port so that they will not get into the seals before the seals are a certain age, and then to have a certain date on which killing may begin. That has been in effect for thirty-five years. When the steamers come in with their catches of seals, as I have often seen them, the average weight would be thirty-five or forty pounds.

[Mr. Browne (St. John's West).]

It can easily be imagined that a seal a day old is a very small thing comparatively, and I am quite satisfied that our fishermen would not dream of killing seals that age because they would not get any benefit from them. The benefit that the Newfoundland sealers get from the seals has depended on the weight of the fat. Up to a year or two ago they got no credit for the fur. They were paid according to the weight of the fat, and it would be absurd to kill seals when they only weigh a few pounds and not to wait until they have become much heavier and thus provide a much higher return.

In replying to my colleague, the minister said that the returns for the 1950 catch being obtained by the royal commission in Newfoundland and the fisheries prices support board here would be finished about the end of July. That seems to me to be a very long time for the fishermen to have to wait. I understood from the minister and his officials that at the latest these returns would be in by the end of June, and that they should be in a position to make a report within a couple of weeks from that time.

However, I do not intend to deal at any length with this subject because the minister has spoken on it and has given every encouragement to the fishermen of Newfoundland that they can expect to be treated fairly with respect to the 1950 catch. After being persuaded, probably by the Secretary of State, the government gave a guarantee for the Labrador fishermen, and decided that they would keep the shore fishery under review. I have no doubt therefore that they are keeping it under review, and the fishermen expect that. They were very disappointed, however, that when the Secretary of State attended the fishermen's convention in April, there was no statement forthcoming from him. When I asked him in the house if he had been present there in an official capacity he said he had not, and he would not give us any statement of his impressions of that convention, although I suppose it is the most important thing that has taken place in Newfoundland with regard to the fishermen for a great many years.

This year representatives of the fishermen were summoned to St. John's from about 200 localities to hold a convention. They held that convention, and there was no official pronouncement from the government to give them any encouragement with respect to what they may expect as a result of the investigations into the 1950 catch, or any guarantee of what they may expect for the 1951 catch. As long ago as 1833, the governor of that day made a rule that the merchants should, before a certain time in the summer, indicate to the fishermen what price they