

referred this morning, and the adoption of a regulation which provided that trawlers should be marked with a number on the bow of the boat and that the numbers shall be at least eighteen inches in height.

Mr. SHORT: We have been in power only two years, and hon. gentlemen opposite were in power for nine years.

Mr. RALSTON: If those accomplishments are any comfort to my hon. friend—

Mr. SHORT: Wait until we are in nine years.

Mr. RALSTON: —of course he is entitled to it.

Mr. GAGNON: I thank the hon. member for Bonaventure for the kind words he has said about me. The time, of course, is too limited to engage in an exchange of compliments, although I appreciate the one he has paid me. I understood from his words that he wished me to continue reading the letter I sent last year to the Minister of Fisheries. The rest of that letter reads:

With reference to the protection of our waters, I wish to draw your attention in particular to the fact that there exists at present in the gulf and in the northern part of the gulf, a nuisance which causes incalculable damage to our fishers and which will become a menace in the future: porpoises. It has been calculated that their number reaches approximately 100,000 and that they consume 1,000,000 tons of small fish every year. These statistics are astounding. It permits us to doubt the utility and usefulness of fishing regulations as long as the porpoises continue to thrive in our waters in such considerable numbers. They take away more merchantable fish in a week than could be taken away by any illegal fishing in many seasons.

In the past the porpoise schools limited their activities to the entrance of the Saguenay or thereabouts. We are therefore convinced that this section was the home of a very intense maritime life for it was sufficient during many centuries to furnish them the quantity of food necessary for life. No biological research has as yet been conducted in this section, but simple observation permits us to state that it is the point on which converged during centuries many species of fish coming from the Atlantic and from the sources of the St. Lawrence. When this fact is more clearly demonstrated, we must assuredly be convinced that the destruction of porpoises interests the maritime provinces and the province of Ontario as well as Quebec, and that therefore the problem is a national one, and consequently a federal one.

From the fact that the porpoises for the last ten years stay less in the district of the Saguenay than for centuries previous, we must conclude that they no longer find sufficient nourishment, and that the river St. Lawrence is so impoverished by their depredations that they are forced to emigrate towards the gulf.

Their destructive work is continually increasing and prevents all profitable fishing operations. It is now common knowledge that many species of fish, which it is claimed go up the river to spawn, have considerably diminished in the last 25 or 50 years.

The government of Quebec undertook to solve this problem but did not succeed; it has, however, become too serious to be abandoned. We can but conclude that the federal parliament alone must see to the removal of a danger which threatens the whole of Canada. When it was a question of lessening the harmful effect of dogfish and seals, etc., affecting the fishing industry of certain provinces, the federal government deemed it proper to intervene; it cannot ignore the problem caused by the presence of porpoises in our waters. Since it concerns the future of the St. Lawrence, the problem is serious enough to warrant the attention of the federal government, on whose part action or cooperation is essential.

In concluding I submit that the federal government, even though the agreement of 1922 be not revised and remain as it is at present, must, in Quebec as well as elsewhere, join in finding a solution for all our fishing problems, and that we also have all possible reasons to claim the organization by it of a modern, competent fishing service, well furnished, and which the provincial government cannot render complete for different reasons.

There exist, I am perfectly convinced, many gaps in our fishing administration, a field of great enterprise where the influence of your department could be beneficently employed and which demands its intervention. To arrive at a practical result I can suggest nothing better, in the first place, than the establishment of a local fisheries bureau in order to establish a contact with our population. This bureau would be the starting point for many other useful enterprises which would develop in due course.

I attach a great importance to the question which I have tried to lay before you, and dare to hope that you will give this problem your prompt and serious attention. I do not doubt that all the members of the province of Quebec will give it their enthusiastic approval.

Hoping to have the occasion of discussing this matter with the expert of your department,

I beg you to accept, dear Mr. Rhodes,

my kindest regards,

O. Gagnon.

This letter was sent in April, 1931, and I was pleased later on to see that my recommendations were included in part, although in different terms, in the memorandum submitted to the provincial government in March, 1932, by the fishermen of Bonaventure, Gaspé and Saguenay. I can only repeat now to the minister, who loves his province so well and who knows the condition of the fisheries there, the demand I made to his predecessor, and ask him to try his best to remedy the detrimental situation which was brought about by the transfer of maritime fisheries to the government of Quebec in 1922.