

Supply—Fisheries

dogfish, this shark-like fish. One way to improve the stock of fish of higher commercial value would be to push this program to its logical conclusion.

Mr. Robichaud: I wish to thank hon. members for their remarks and to assure them that the suggestions they made will receive full consideration by my department and myself. I was pleased to hear the hon. member for Queens say that the increased expenditures which the estimates forecast for the Department of Fisheries were justified.

The hon. member for Queens also mentioned that Canadian fisheries within the last ten years had slipped from sixth to tenth place in world production. As the hon. member mentioned, there is a good reason for this. We in Canada have to compete on the world market. Other countries which may have greater fishery production need the fish they catch for their own consumption. To them their production is a necessity. From my recent visit to the U.S.S.R. I know that the fishing industry in Canada could not exist if we had to produce fish at the price which it costs some other countries. For example, herring costs the U.S.S.R. from 30 cents to 40 cents per pound to produce. I just wonder what we could do in Canada if we had to increase our production at that cost.

I want to assure the hon. member that it is the objective of the Department of Fisheries to encourage the processing of herring for human consumption. As the hon. member mentioned, a number of new plants have been erected, particularly on the Atlantic coast, for the processing of herring. A few weeks ago at the annual meeting of the Fisheries Council in Montreal I asked the fishing industry to take a serious look at processing more herring for human consumption so that increased productivity will result in a better price to our fishermen.

● (9:00 p.m.)

A number of hon. members, including the hon. members for Queens, Vancouver Quadra, Kings, Shelburne-Yarmouth-Clare, and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, have referred to the seal hunt on the Atlantic coast and particularly in the gulf of St. Lawrence. I wish to thank hon. members for the position they have taken in respect of this problem, which has created such interest and commotion in this country and abroad in the last two or three years. I should like to repeat what I said previously in this house. I am prepared to take every measure possible to prevent any cruelty in the methods used for the killing of seals. Recently

I have issued a number of reports on the sealing operation. I have explained how it is a part of the fishery operation of the east coast. Some of the suggestions which are made in connection with this operation are made by people who, although I am sure thoughtful and well intentioned, definitely are not familiar with the problems this industry has to face on the Atlantic coast.

I am sure hon. members will be pleased to learn that on my return from a visit to the U.S.S.R. I spent a few days in Norway where I had an opportunity to discuss this problem with representatives of the Norwegian government. Most hon. members are aware that Norway now is the only foreign country engaged in sealing operations on the west Atlantic coast. We have succeeded in having the sealing regulations on the front—outside Newfoundland and in the area off the east coast of Newfoundland—accepted under the protocol of ICNAF, but unfortunately Norway and Canada, being the only two countries which are interested, it is rather difficult to consider under ICNAF the type of regulations which will control not only conservation and protection but also the method of killing. During my discussions in Norway I was given assurance that the Norwegians would be prepared to enter into a special agreement with Canada in order to introduce on the front special regulations for controlling not only conservation and protection, but also to some extent the methods of killing.

For that purpose, since ICNAF is meeting this year in Boston, on Thursday of this week I plan to go to Boston myself. I will meet with representatives of the Norwegian government and of the fishing industry. We will discuss the type of measures which could be applied on the front and which could be effectively enforced. I have every reason to believe we will receive the full co-operation of the Norwegian government in introducing measures on the front quite comparable as we now have to control the situation on the gulf of St. Lawrence.

The hon. member for Queens also mentioned the use of aircraft in the seal hunt. I agree that there should be better control over the operation of these aircraft. I am looking forward to amending further the sealing regulations because I believe there still is room for improvement. It is my intention to look into the possibility of having better control over the aircraft operations because, with regret, I must say that during the last season, if there were a few cases of abuse—and they were very few—these were mainly by the operators