

I have been very loath to extend the season and I have declined to do so from year to year.

Mr. SINCLAIR: Never.

Mr. HAZEN: I do not think that during the last three years there has been a single exception. But this year there seems to be a very persistent attempt made to secure an extension. The request comes not only from the districts which are affected but from members of the House and I have a letter from the hon. member for Guysboro pointing out reasons why he thinks there should be an extension in certain parts of Nova Scotia. I have had representations made to me by the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Loggie) who has been a persistent advocate of not extending the season. But owing to the fact that conditions are of a most unusual character he says that for the first time he thinks that possibly it would be in the public interest that an extension should be made. We have sometimes found that when conditions have been unfavourable at the commencement of the lobster season and fish have not been caught for a considerable time after the season opened the conditions have been so favourable during the latter part of the season that the catch has been just as good as in normal years. In view of the very strong representations that have been made to the department we have asked our fishery officers in the different districts all over the country to carefully observe and note what the catch and conditions are and to make reports to us which we will receive by the fifteenth of this month so that we will be in a position to come to an intelligent conclusion in regard to the matter. I dislike extending the seasons. They were made for the purpose of preserving the fish and preventing the destruction of the fisheries and it seems to me to be almost better, taking one year with another, that there should be no extension, because, while the catch might be smaller one year, perhaps as a result of the enforcement of the regulations and the preventing of the taking of a large number of lobsters, an increased catch is the result and the fishing is better in the future. However, there are other considerations which will have to be taken into account. The fishermen go to considerable expense to get their gear and supply themselves with boats and lobster traps. Some of them make it their principal source of livelihood and if they are not allowed to pursue their calling, and they get a smaller quantity of fish, it makes the conditions

very difficult for them and that is especially the case this year when there is such a demand for food products. We have taken steps to get preliminary information to enable us to come to a wise and sound conclusion in regard to the matter.

Mr. SINCLAIR: Could the minister tell me what the dates are when the season closes on the different sections of the coast?

Mr. HAZEN: It closes in different districts at different times. In the district in which the hon. member for Northumberland is interested, it closes on June 25, and in the district in which my hon. friend from Guysborough is interested, it closes on June 20. I think it is five days earlier in that part of Nova Scotia than it is along the gulf of St. Lawrence and the Northumberland Straits. It opens earlier and closes earlier in the districts on the south shore of Nova Scotia, on the bay of Fundy and in the counties of St. John and Charlotte. These dates, of course, were fixed in consequence of the reports of commissions. There have been from time to time lobster commissions. There was one about 1897, or 1898, and in 1912 there was another to consider altered conditions. The close seasons were fixed very largely on the reports of these commissions which have been made after taking evidence and getting the views of the men who are interested in the lobster fishery on different parts of the coast of the Maritime Provinces.

Mr. SINCLAIR: I want to point out the importance of arriving at a decision as early as possible, because, if it is left until the 15th of the present month and the season closes on the 20th, there will scarcely be time enough for the fishermen to get the news on the coast. It takes several days to have them notified in regard to an extension, and if an extension is going to be made, a decision should be arrived at as soon as possible, and the fishermen given notice at least a week ahead so as to permit them to make their plans as to the date at which they will take up their traps. With reference to the district in which I am particularly interested, from Halifax Harbour to Point Michaud, I would ask the minister to instruct the officers to telegraph the information so that the fishermen will have sufficient notice.

Mr. HAZEN: My hon. friend's point is well taken, and we will wire if it has not already been done. When I was speaking about getting these reports on the 15th I