

are characterized by a lack of mature fish and a predominance of immature. If the latter are caught, it is a matter of indifference at which season it is done, as all succeeding spawning periods are eliminated, anyway. This is also true of the mature halibut. There is no reason why capture a week before spawning-time should be more disastrous than capture six months previously, all the remaining periods of spawning being eliminated, anyway. If the number of fish caught by the fleet remains the same, prohibition of fishing during such a season would mean naturally that of those fish usually caught during spawning the more intense fishery would cause just as many to be captured before the season as would be caught later because of the protection. As a result the number of fish present each spawning-time would be unaltered. As a matter of fact, the areas now needing protection are those in which halibut rarely have a chance to reach maturity, and to allow them to do so the only method available is to give them a better chance of escaping capture. It is not sufficient merely to alter the time of year at which they are caught.

Among other reasons advanced is one implying that fish caught during winter are of poorer quality, with larger heads and leaner bodies, than those taken during summer. Regarding this it should suffice to state that the observed difference is due rather to the fact that in summer immature fish from banks with rapidly growing fish are utilized, while in winter mature slow-growing fish are obtained. These mature poor-quality fish come from undepleted northern, or outside, banks naturally characterized by large-headed fish, and it is extremely improbable that they change their appearance greatly with the season. It is just as well that these fish are utilized to some extent at least. The difference between banks in so far as quality is concerned is far greater than can be assigned to seasonal differences. It is not to be denied that there is such a seasonal difference, but it cannot be assigned the importance given it. This is the more true as it has no immediate bearing on the all-important objective of preservation of the banks.

AN EXTENSION OF THE CLOSE SEASON.

Despite the fact that there are cogent reasons against the adoption of a close season during two winter months, it is possible that certain modifications of it might be feasible; for instance, an extension to four months. But if not disastrous to the fishery and to the fishermen because of its length, the objection previously held that the already depleted banks would be subject to a still greater strain would apply to an even greater degree. The restraint on the fishery would be accomplished principally, perhaps, by forcing vessels and men to lose a third of their time. It is possible that some other fishery could be developed to supplement that for the halibut during that season, but at present none offers itself; and even if such were the case, the objection to the changed concentration of the fishery still remains. So it is hardly conceivable that such a measure could meet with unqualified approval.

A SUMMER CLOSE SEASON.

A course, on the other hand, which might obviate the most dangerous features of the close season would be to place it in the summer. One summer month would be the equivalent of two winter months. Such action would result in discouraging the capture of small immature fish, of which spring and summer catches mainly consist on the older banks, and would encourage winter fishing. The influence of cold-storage firms would not in such a case be adverse. But the serious question would still remain as to whether the total catch from any bank would be sufficiently decreased. If the demand overcame the handicap of an increase of the voyage length of 200 per cent. within ten years, would it not overcome one of a decrease in available fishing-time of even 30 per cent.? Although it is probable that what the banks need is a total cessation of fishing in view of the great rate of depletion, yet such a measure as closure during summer months would be certainly effective in its nature, in contrast to the winter close season.

A NURSERY.

Supplementing the proposed close season, the Bill mentioned above for the conservation of the fisheries defined a nursery of about 200 square miles to be withdrawn from use. There are very decisive reasons for regarding the measure as totally inadequate. There are no considerable migrations between banks, as has been shown, and it is not probable that any but the zones nearest to such a permanently closed region would profit by it at all. The area of the continental shelf within the 140-fathom line off the coasts of Alaska and British Columbia, between Bering