

The apparent value of the close season during the winter is greatly modified by certain considerations. One of the most prominent of these is the fact that during the two months of December and January the catch is but half that prevailing during the summer months, as is shown on the foregoing chart. That is, the effectiveness of such a close season would be half that of a similar one in the summer. Furthermore, the decrease in total catch is in accordance with the diminished catch per unit of gear, and indicates with it the fact that the two proposed months are the most expensive. Providing the far greater consideration of the future of the banks were not in question, there would be no possible objection to legislating away the unprofitable part of a business year. But, aside from the fact that it is not the *bona-fide* object of the proposed legislation to increase the immediate prosperity of the industry, it can be shown to have a really detrimental effect on the condition of the banks. The proposed close season would surely put vessels on a better financial basis, encouraging the building of more and rendering them capable of profitable operation on smaller summer catches than is now the case. This would mean the enlargement of the fleet and the closer fishing of the banks, including those considered the least profitable.

Fishing on these more depleted southern banks off the coast of British Columbia is prevalent, mostly in summer, because the catch per unit of gear is at that time highest, and the reliance is on young fish almost entirely. It has been shown that it is these banks which need protection, and if they are to have it, it must come while fishing is being done on them. Instead of that, as has been pointed out above, a winter close season will intensify the fishery, the more so as the most depleted banks are nearer to market than the less depleted.

Cold-storage plants play an important part in intensifying this result of the closure. They not merely maintain the demand, but tend to counteract the extensive natural increase in price in winter and the decrease during the summer. This results from the absorption of surplus fish in summer for freezing and its sale during seasons of scarcity. There is in the winter, nevertheless, a considerable catch of fresh fish with which the frozen product must compete. The elimination of this catch during several months would without the cold-storage plants apparently stop the consumption, but with them could simply force the buying by of more extensive stocks of fish frozen during the summer. It is obvious that this has a tendency to impel still better prices in summer and poorer in winter. In other words, there would ensue a more profitable summer fishery, hence a more intensive one. It should be observed in this connection that the nearby banks off the coast of British Columbia yield a medium of small-sized immature fish ("chicken halibut") very suitable for freezing. These banks are those fished most intensively in summer and need better, not poorer, protection. A certain measure of the harm it, it is evident, be averted by forbidding the sale of cold-storage halibut during the close season.

The most generally held reason for supporting a winter close season is that it is designed to protect the halibut during its spawning period. The assumption is that the fleet resorts to "spawning-grounds" in which are to be found spawning fish congregated from other localities, and that the catch consists to an unusual degree of such fish. However reasonable this may sound, it is impossible to find any basis of scientific fact behind it. On the contrary, so-called spawning-banks are those less depleted than others because less accessible, or because it pays to resort to them only during the winter seasons. It has been demonstrated that at one time the banks now characterized by small immature fish had a population of large, undoubtedly mature, fish, and that their absence is due to the effects of commercial fishing. We therefore come to the anomalous conclusion that protection is proposed for banks which show exhaustion least, as they have a more nearly adequate supply of breeding fish.

If, however, the claim had been that within the confines of each bank winter fishing was carried on in areas characterized by spawning fish, more weight might be given it. As a matter of fact, however, no proof of such congregation has been found, and observation has not yet disclosed any annual change in average size in one portion of a bank which did not take place in another. The shift in the fishing-grounds, according to season, is something entirely different from this, being a removal of the fleet to other banks far distant. It is a fact worthy of every emphasis that no such extensive movement on the part of the fish is to be found, whether there is some possibility of a limited and local movement or not.

It would seem certain that the closure would not protect spawning fish especially, and there would be little utility in extending protection to halibut spawning and immature alike at the cost of more intensive fishing during other seasons. As has been indicated, the depleted banks