

Supply—Fisheries

then we shall have dwindling fisheries. On the east coast we are concerned with two problems. One is the decline of the Atlantic salmon. The Atlantic salmon is not as important in dollars as is the west coast salmon commercially but it is of great importance in the life down there commercially and as a sport and tourist attraction.

The provinces have been concerned about the steady decline in Atlantic salmon. This is in great contrast, of course, to the west coast where, since the thirties, our salmon run, because of our conservation, has steadily increased. As I pointed out, the provinces have been concerned about sport fishing. This spring we had a happy meeting here in Ottawa with the Atlantic provinces, and agreed for the first time on uniform conservation laws. We closed down on the season. We closed down on the catch allowed to sport fishermen. Instead of being regulated by provincial boundaries we now have regulations for scientific boundaries of three main areas, the Atlantic area, the bay of Fundy area and the gulf of St. Lawrence area. I cannot speak too highly of the co-operation we received from the provinces concerned, including associations down there such as the Atlantic salmon association, and a group I met yesterday, the Miramichi salmon association. They are agreed with us on the value of this work. It is going to be tough for the first three or four years because shorter seasons are going to mean less fish and there are few enough fish now. But we feel very keenly that we can bring back the Atlantic salmon fisheries as we have brought back the west coast fisheries.

Mr. Brooks: May I ask the minister this point whether he is doing anything about seals, which are supposed to be quite a menace to the Atlantic salmon?

Mr. Sinclair: Yes. Federal study of this problem indicates two things, increased protection of the rivers to cut down poaching, because the scarcer the salmon the worse poaching is, and then increased action in the other field on other predators such as the harbour seals and hair seals. We pay a bounty on them. We stepped it up. Our own officers kill these seals, but we do not pay any bounty on what they kill. But the worst predators are the mergansers. There is a variety of uncouth names which are usually attached to them. These migratory birds feed principally on salmon spawn and small smolts. We had a little bit of difficulty in getting permission to kill them because they are protected under the migratory game birds act, but we have now extended our program of killing off mergansers. The program in

one river has been so successful that an increased number of fingerlings has been noted for the first time.

But on the east coast the main problem is the lobster. Studies of this sort which refer to lobsters are slow and painstaking. The lobster grows about 50 per cent each year for the first five years. We have to determine the period of sexual maturity in order to allow at least one breeding season. Thus our aim should be to have the fishermen catch the lobster when it is at its best size, from the point of view of growth and the point of view of marketing. As hon. members know, we slightly increased the size for lobsters on the east coast only last year. That action has met with understanding in almost all parts of the maritimes except two areas, where the fishermen feel that we are crowding down on them. One or two years' enforcement of the larger size is going to result in larger size. They will see the reflection in their catch. I may say that the Nova Scotia fishermen are completely in favour of this regulation. As with all conservation regulations, it is difficult at the time you enforce it; but in the end, when the fishermen see that they are getting bigger catches, they understand what we are trying to do.

Out on the west coast we have an entirely different problem in conservation. We can pride ourselves that, over the years, the Department of Fisheries has done a good job on these fisheries, which produce almost half the dollar value of all the fisheries in Canada. We have three main species out there, namely salmon, halibut and herring. All of them are what we call controlled fisheries. They are under complete scientific control. We have done enough work on them to know exactly how much we can get each year, and exactly how much we must allow to go upstream to spawn in the case of salmon, to spawn in bays in the case of herring and to spawn on the banks in the case of halibut. More and more fishermen have been getting into the fishing industry on the west coast, using better and better gear, bigger boats, better nets—nylon nets—and better and better electronic gear in order to find the fish faster. The trouble is that there are still only so many fish. We have more and more fishermen using bigger and bigger gear and only the same number of fish. What happens there is easy to understand. The annual catch per fisherman goes down. In order to survive he tries to catch a higher price per unit of fish. Fish in the end have got to compete with farm products, so that there is no easy solution by driving up the price of salmon, halibut or herring.

[Mr. Sinclair.]