

Adjournment Debate

it is the result of un-supervised, illegal fishing, or overfishing by the Indian food fishery. These are all excuses. The fact is that lots of people have various ideas.

● (2215)

Let me read from a letter I recently received. To protect the author, I will keep his name anonymous. He wrote:

The number of fishery officers is at about the same level as 1947 despite the massive growth of the west coast fishing industry. The equipment these front-line guardians must use to patrol the entire west coast is often out of service, because of age, or simply too outdated to be practical for modern policing. As a result there is quite a bit of poaching along the coast by a minority of fishermen.

Over the years there have been a couple of reports produced which outline the problems resulting from shortages, but they have been either ignored or suppressed. They say that poaching is a crime, but at the moment there is no way these people can possibly manage to protect our resources simply because they are so few. The Conservative candidate who ran against me—unsuccessfully, I am pleased to say—said that unless we protect the habitat from illegal fishing, there is no way—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. George Henderson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, commercial gillnet catch data for the Fraser River indicated that the number of chinook salmon returning to the river this spring is well below average. The cumulative catch to May 27 was only 55 per cent of the 1975 to 1979 average for the same period. Despite the closure this season of the United States fishery off Point Roberts and in the San Juan Islands, which targets mainly on Fraser bound chinook, there was no increase in fish entering the river. Immediately prior to the closure of the Fraser River gillnet fishery, commercial nets were producing 1.5 fish per boat, which amounts to 50 per cent of expectations. During the period April 21 to May 27, eight days of fishing were permitted as compared to ten days in an equivalent period in 1979.

We are not aware of any specific request to reopen the Fraser on two subsequent Mondays although numerous

suggestions from fishermen were heard at meetings held with them. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans closure is in effect until June 22 at which time the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission assumes management of convention waters including the Fraser River. Fishermen are aware that unless the chinook test fishery indicates a substantial increase in stock abundance, there can be no further openings for chinook fishing.

In addition to the closure to chinook gillnet fishing, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has closed the Fraser and adjacent waters to chinook sport fishing until further notice. While there are still coastal areas that will remain open to commercial and sport chinook fishing, these fish are generally of a different age composition and to some degree of different origin, including United States streams and hatcheries. However, the approach waters of Johnstone Strait and Juan de Fuca Strait where Fraser River bound chinook can be intercepted, are closed and will remain closed until July 13 to commercial net fishing. In these ways, fishermen other than Fraser River gillnet fishermen are contributing to chinook conservation.

On the matter of compensation, the current Fraser closure differs considerably from the commercial fishing closure for Atlantic salmon which was for a period of five years and which was subsequently extended through 1980.

The Fraser situation is a short-term problem. That is, it is an in-season closure that is typical of salmon fisheries throughout the Pacific region. More than 80 per cent of the Fraser gill-net fishermen will, if the usual fishing pattern is followed, fish in other areas of the coast during the course of the salmon season. It is recognized, however, that this closure will cause some short-term economic hardship, but the Fraser gillnetter is not the sole bearer of the conservation burden.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.19 p.m.