

some importance in the island of Cape Breton. No doubt he has seen a very numerous-signed petition which has been forwarded from that district in connection with the proposal to extend the season for fishing lobsters. I recollect in my time that this was a subject of considerable difficulty; and I have no doubt that the Minister will find in his way some of those difficulties which I had to encounter. But, taking into consideration the very peculiar hardships on that coast in connection with the drift ice, the department, in my time, was enabled, on several occasions, to make an exception in connection with the duration of the season. The season, I believe, ordinarily ends about the 15th of July, and the petitioners are anxious to have that extended to the 1st of August, so that they really ask fifteen days additional. But, in order that there shall not be too much drain on the lobster fishery in that district, I understand that they are willing to submit to a regulation by which they are not to begin so early as the fishermen in the other districts, that is to say, they will cut off from the earlier part of the season until the 1st of May, provided they get those fifteen days additional. Now, the hon. gentleman, of course, is in possession of information of considerable importance in this matter to which I have no access, that is to say, the reports of his officers. Since my time I can quite understand that the subject is placed more clearly before him by the great experience of the officers of the district, in so far as investigation has gone, touching the condition of the lobster fishery for that particular time. It is, of course, a point to consider whether, in those fifteen days, the berried lobsters are in such a condition that it would be destroying or affecting the permanency of the lobster industry. I therefore rise in order to impress upon him, by calling attention to the subject in this manner, the great importance of dealing with that subject as promptly as possible. No one knows better than the hon. gentleman himself, coming as he does from Prince Edward Island, how important it is that the parties interested in this matter should have an early intimation of the decision of the hon. gentleman. If the hon. gentleman can see his way to do it, I should be obliged if he would bring down such recent reports as he may have in his possession touching upon the condition of the fishery in that district, and any points touching the condition of the lobsters during the month of July, and particularly the last fifteen days of that month.

The **MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES** (Mr. Davies). The question the hon. gentleman has raised is one of supreme importance, and I have not yet reached the conclusion that it would be in the public interest to extend the open season which the law now fixes at the 15th of July, although I do not mean to say that my mind is absolutely closed upon the subject. But

**Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER.**

the hon. gentleman is aware that last year I called a meeting of a number of the lobster packers for the purpose of ascertaining, if I could, what their view was upon the subject, and what the real facts were which could be gathered from practical men. There was a great deal of difference of opinion. We are now in this peculiar position, that this enormous industry which brings in so much wealth to Canada, is in danger of being destroyed. Our American cousins to the south have absolutely destroyed their lobster fishing industry along the coast of Maine by recklessly permitting lobsters to be caught at all seasons of the year. I would impress upon the hon. gentlemen from the maritime provinces the great importance, the supreme importance, in my humble opinion, of maintaining, even at the risk of temporary unpopularity, those provisions which are essential for the preservation of that great industry. Personally, I would like very much if I could see my way—and I am in almost daily consultation with my adviser upon that subject, Mr. Prince—I would like very much if I could see my way to grant the request of those gentlemen. But I have never yet been able to bring my mind to admit the justice of the claim they put forward, that there must be the same number of days allowed to the fishing industry in each locality. Nature will prevent the fishermen in some localities from beginning as early as nature permits them to begin in others; but it does not follow, to my mind at all, as a sequence that they should be permitted to continue beyond that limit. And there is this very grave objection which I state now frankly to the hon. gentleman and to the House—for I have no doubt the matter will be discussed by maritime men before the session is much older—that if I grant a concession to the fishermen along the eastern coast of Cape Breton, I will be forced to grant a similar concession to a great many lobster fishermen in other places. The department is inundated with petitions and demands from fishermen along the north shore of New Brunswick, the south shore of Prince Edward Island, as well as the east shore of Cape Breton, asking for this same concession. I know the difficulty of resisting it. I am overwhelmed with personal appeals and official applications from day to day, and week to week.

**Sir CHARLES TUPPER.** Circumstances are very different in different localities, are they not?

The **MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES.** Yes, circumstances are very different. In the examination that I made of that question last year, I found that before coming into office, I think I came in on the 13th of July, that my predecessor had extended the time to the 1st of August—I think it was. Of course, not being in possession of the official information on which