

that to omit them altogether would have little appreciable effect on the business of a well conducted factory, especially were a longer time given in which to fill orders. What then is the best closed time to permit these breeders to reproduce in peace—confining the enquiry to Prince Edward Island only?

In the course of communication with the packers I have been requested to bring to the notice of the Department all manner of suggestions, ranging from a few of the great firms that are satisfied with the law as it stands, down to the denizens of a certain headland who pray the powers that be to remove all restrictions and superannuate or shoot the Wardens. This is the place to offer some remarks on the more intelligent of these suggestions, it being borne in mind that the problem is not solely to protect the fish (which could be done by total prohibition) nor to please everybody (which is impossible) but to render permanent in this part of Canada a valuable industry that has proved fleeting elsewhere, and, in attempting to render it permanent, neither to cramp present nor prospective enterprise nor to benumb expended capital.

Besides the views of those who are satisfied with existing regulations and of those who wish for an extension of time, the following plans have met with advocates: to close the factories during the warm weather of midsummer; to adopt different times of beginning and closing on the north and south shores of the island; to place lobsters on the same footing as fanned fish of the sea, removing all restrictions as to time and permitting them to be caught as long as they can be; and when the supply falls too low to wholly close all factories for one or more years, as the exigencies of the case may require.

Although observation indicates that the spawning season on this coast is July (or August on the south) a proposal to close that month is beset by difficulties that would be more oppressive to the packers than the simple remedy of refusing to receive fish in spawn. Experienced packers can tell at a glance whether the spawn has been removed by the villainous practice called "combing." This skill should be sufficient for prevention without the harsh measure of totally stopping from work. To close the factories for a month in the middle of the season would be to disperse the hands who could neither find other employment during the recess nor be readily recalled. The taking up and storing of traps would be at once a grievance and an expense. Moreover the limited staff of fishery officers would be even less able than they are now to check infringement of the law. Briefly then, the closing in July, even admitting it the true spawning season here, may at present be considered impracticable.

The demand for a complete abolition of the close season seems founded on a want of knowledge of the difference in habits between lobsters and deep sea fish, which I have endeavored to set forth above. Neither hopes nor theory can stand in face of the fact that the supply has been ruined on other coasts by over fishing.

No other result could rationally be looked for on the island coast were it thrown open. The larger factories carried on by responsible and judicious men are not those to be feared, but the crowd of smaller competitors that, without capital or conscience, would spring up with no other view than to fill the greatest number of cans without care as to the contents. At present there is no regulation to prevent a whole village of lobster shanties being set down alongside of factories that are intended to be permanent and that represent capital of some thousands of dollars each. When such predatory adventures have succeeded in ruining the locality they can drop the business without loss, whereas those packers who have erected expensive buildings cannot do so. It must also be noted that were a close time abolished Government could not grant the licenses that several of the packers have applied for. A close time so far from being a detriment, is therefore a protection to the legitimate fisher. The views of the advocates of unrestrained fishing are set forth in the following communications which two of the leading packers have favored me with.

Hon. Mr. Gavin, a member of the Local Government, says :—

"Respecting the close season I would wish to make a few remarks. For my own part I would be quite well satisfied with it as it is at present, but there are other parts of the island where I know it operates disadvantageously, and this leads me to the question: 'Why should there be a close season for lobsters?' I have given the subject