

Oral Questions

I want to ask the minister where the reductions will take place and how they will be effected. I would point out to him how important Atlantic salmon are to those who live on the northeast coast of Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador particularly. Is it his intention to make reductions there? Is it his intention to reinstitute salmon at all in any part of New Brunswick, Gaspé or on the west coast of Newfoundland?

Hon. James A. McGrath (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): As the hon. member knows, the new strategy for Atlantic salmon announced yesterday calls for a change from a global approach to a zone approach in monitoring. As we establish zones we shall be able to establish the TACs, or regulations governing both commercial and sports fishing. There will be a reduction in the number of commercial licences and, obviously, this reduction will take place in the only area where there is a substantial commercial fishery, namely, Newfoundland.

As far as New Brunswick is concerned, I cannot foresee any increase in commercial activity. However, we intend to give the new salmon management policy which will establish management zones and an over-all salmon board an opportunity to become operative before we make any hard and fast decisions. I can tell the hon. member that I cannot foresee any increase in commercial salmon fishing activity.

Mr. Rompkey: The release said in a later paragraph that salmon will be fished mainly in their native province. We have heard a lot about provincial rights. We know that provincial premiers have rights—as a matter of fact, some provincial premiers have even more rights than the Prime Minister. But we did not know that salmon have rights.

I want to know, first of all, whether or not the salmon have been consulted as to whether they can be fished in their home provinces. The minister speaks, in all seriousness, of Atlantic salmon returning to maritime and Quebec rivers, and says they are currently being intercepted by Canadian fishermen. I want to know what that means. He says it should be possible to eliminate most interceptions by changing fishing seasons and by limiting fishing efforts through licensing. Can the minister clarify this point and explain to us how these salmon are going to be fished within provinces? Will he tell us exactly what he means by that statement?

Mr. McGrath: I did, in fact, consult with the hon. member yesterday; I briefed him on this statement. Obviously, it would have been more productive had I consulted with the salmon.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: It seems to me that all the good will behind the briefing we made available to the hon. member yesterday was for naught, because he does not seem to understand the simple theme of this whole strategy. The central theme is zone management, and this is what will be put in place. He does not seem to understand that each run of salmon going up a river has its own identifiable characteristics. Obviously, this means that salmon running up provincial rivers, up the Miramichi

[Mr. Rompkey.]

River, for example, or the Saint John River in New Brunswick, are distinguishable from the salmon running up the rivers of southern Newfoundland.

They will be managed with that in mind, remembering, as well, that in order for us to secure a meaningful international convention which will be effective in reducing the catch of salmon off the coast of Greenland by the Greenlanders, we shall have to put our own house in order. The theme is conservation and enhancement, which was obviously not achieved by the policy announced in 1972 by Mr. Davis.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I should like to follow up the answer the minister has just given. If the restrictions to be imposed are to have a meaningful effect, then a more satisfactory arrangement with regard to the overfishing off the coast of Greenland will have to be reached. What arrangements has he made, or what negotiations is he conducting to achieve an agreement covering the overfishing of those salmon stocks off Greenland?

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, the EEC has management responsibility for the Greenland fishery, and we recently had a delegation in Brussels. We were able through ICNAF to get the total allowable catch off Greenland established at around 1,100 tons. We consider that figure to be too high and we want that TAC reduced. This is the objective we are pursuing.

What I say to the hon. member is what I have just said in response to his hon. friend: if we want to make a case for a meaningful international convention to control the interception of Canadian salmon on the high seas, we have to be seen to be putting our own house in order. That is the objective of this program. That speaks to stricter action against poaching; it also means getting the whole commercial fishery in order, an effort which involves a reduction in the number of commercial licences.

Mr. MacLellan: To safeguard the salmon stocks, it is also important to increase surveillance over the rivers in which the salmon spawn. That is an expensive proposition. If the provinces are to have this responsibility, what arrangements has the minister made to meet the cost of this surveillance? Has he secured an agreement from the President of Treasury Board to make funds available for this purpose?

Mr. McGrath: We have offered to hand over to the provinces—and essentially we are speaking of two provinces, New Brunswick and Newfoundland—total surveillance responsibility on their rivers. They already have part of that responsibility. The hon. member should bear in mind that, of course, the provinces realize the full revenue from the licensing fees on those rivers; the federal government does not get a dollar. One province has replied positively, but we have yet to hear from Newfoundland.

If the provinces were to enter into such an arrangement with the Government of Canada, we would be prepared to agree to some kind of cost-sharing program over a prescribed period of