

matter well worth careful consideration by such a guild of lobster packers, as I ventured to suggest through the local press, whether this damaging slur on the island product is not traceable to the blindness and greed of one or two less respectable canners in making use of gravid and even soft-shelled fish. The supposition that such is the case is quite admissible, and it seems cruel that a vast industry, employing labor liberally and bringing to this small Province large remittances, should be put in peril by law-breakers in their short-sighted improvidence. Nothing would tend more readily to establish European confidence in island shipments than a strong resolution passed and acted on by the eminent packers, pledging themselves to use no fish in their canneries excepting of full size, vigor and condition, and, moreover, committing less conscientious competitors to conform to the regulation under pain of exposure. In this way alone can the relations of the packers, the fishery officers and the public be put on a proper basis. The proposal to appoint a special fishery constable, expressly to look after the lobster trade, would be somewhat derogatory to the respectable packing firms, and would be unnecessary in view of such action as above suggested. I am happy that many of the leading firms act on and believe in the principle above expressed. At the same time it is within my knowledge that a good many factories *do* make use of spawners, although it is all but impossible to bring home the offence. Moral certainty is not legal proof. The only true protection of the industry, as already said, rests with the leading men engaged in it. Such protective action should be made universal, and should emanate from the parties to be benefitted. In other respects besides those above stated united action on the part of the packers seems eminently desirable for their interests, especially in making representations to the Government, where views set forth by a united body would naturally carry more weight than the individual expressions of opinion with which the Department is flooded. Let me here take the opportunity of strongly asserting, from a knowledge of the facts and with a view to the statement reaching the public, that at present the first-class brands of Prince Edward Island canned goods—*provided they are first-class brands*—can be received with every confidence.

To resume: It is admitted that female lobsters are occasionally found carrying ova at all seasons of the year when the water has attained a degree of temperature sufficiently warm for them to seek the shore, and in greater or less numbers according to the depth of water in which the traps are set. This has induced some fishermen to believe that the breeders spawn twice a year and others to assert that they spawn at all times of the year. Such may be, but the balance of present evidence goes to prove that on the Prince Edward Island Coast midsummer is the true spawning time, and that any departure from it arises from causes that cannot be reckoned on. It is reasonable to suppose that the work of reproduction having been accomplished in July or August, the fish recover their vigor and remain full and wholesome until they retire into deeper water. And such is found to be the fact. Last year I myself caused traps to be set later than closing day and the lobsters taken therein proved to be in good condition. This year the fish were perfectly sound in quality, in all parts of the Province, on the day of closing and not perceptibly fewer in numbers. In 1879 returns from almost all the factories then in operation gave, for the whole catch, only from three to ten per cent. of fish in spawn, much the larger proportion being in July. Suppose the sexes equally divided, as there seems reason to believe is so, there results that out of every one hundred lobsters in the sea or caught, only fifty are females, and these females take five years from the egg to become fecund. And if the total proportion of lobsters in spawn does not in most cases, as reported to me, exceed ten per cent. of the whole island catch of both sexes, it shows that one-fifth of the females carry ova each year. That is to say, there are four times as many young breeders coming forward as there are egg-bearers, and one-fourth of that number come into breeding year after year. The protection of undersized fish is, therefore, a protection of future breeders, and there are so few actual breeders in every hundred lobsters caught that to can them is a wanton waste that even the perpetrators do not excuse except on the plea that the canning time is so short that they are driven to make use of all that come to hand. The number of actual breeders is really so small