

*Supply—Fisheries*

for Comox-Alberni. In many years of sitting as an opposition member, both in the legislature and in the House of Commons, I must say this is the first time a cabinet minister has considered it important enough to call on me as an opposition member.

I have a number of specific matters which I wish to bring to the attention of the minister. I discussed during the Christmas recess with officers of the fishermen's union in Vancouver, and I imagine the minister has already been made aware of this point, the question of the re-institution of the bounty on dogfish. The dogfish population on the coast appears to have been increasing very rapidly in the last year or so and has been causing very great damage, both to the fish and to the nets, causing considerable loss to the fishermen.

I can understand the difficulties with which the minister may be faced in re-instituting this bounty because, of course, the history of the way in which the bounty was taken advantage of by certain fishing companies does present problems. As soon as the bounty was instituted the price paid by the companies for dogfish was reduced by that amount. In a very adroit way, of course, the fishing companies succeeded in having the federal treasury pay for half the dogfish they bought.

There is a similar matter I would like to bring to the minister's attention and that is the question of reducing the population of sea lions which has become very acute once again on our coast and the fishermen with whom I have discussed the matter are of the opinion that the government might well take some action at the rookeries of these animals to reduce the population sharply.

They have also been concerned for a year or two with the question of whether or not Japanese fishermen in the Pacific are actually catching fish which had their origins in Canadian rivers. I understand there was a sort of expedition made from the biological station of Nanaimo a year or so ago into the western Pacific waters in an attempt to solve this problem and to get some factual information about it. Some of the fishermen with whom I discussed the matter are of the opinion that expedition did not go far enough and that they would have been better advised to have made arrangements to go out with the Japanese fishing fleet. I believe the union in fact asked permission for one or more of their members to be sent on such an expedition so they could report to the fishermen on the coast as to the evidence that might be found with regard to this matter.

I have also received a letter from the northern branch of the fishermen's union at

[Mr. Cameron.]

Prince Rupert which is connected with this question and this letter sets forth the present position with regard to territorial waters and suggests that the present three-mile limit is wholly inadequate to protect Canadian fisheries from foreign fishing in what are virtually, so far as fishing is concerned, our own territorial waters. I would like the minister to take note of that matter although, of course, that particular question does not come within the purview of his department.

Another matter was discussed by me with the union of which I was reminded by the hon. member for Halifax when he was speaking. He was citing as a black mark against the Liberal administration the fact that the numbers of fishermen engaged in fishing in his part of the world had been steadily declining. Our trouble in British Columbia is the exact opposite—the numbers of fishermen have not been declining nearly enough to make up for the modern gear and methods of fishing that have been instituted. The fishermen's union in discussing this matter, twice have told me they thought it was time the government was beginning to consider the question of some method of limiting licences without imposing unfair penalties on bona fide fishermen at the present time, but that there should be a program of progressively limiting the number of licences. As licence holders die or leave the industry the licences should not be replaced in order that the fishing fleet might be reduced to a size where there would be an adequate livelihood for those engaged in the industry, without endangering the conservation methods. I might say that all the fishermen with whom I have spoken are in hearty support of such conservation methods and I believe this is evident in the very short fishing seasons now permitted in the waters between Vancouver island and the mainland. These have been progressively reduced in recent years by conservation methods in order to preserve the fishing industry and I feel that probably one of the reasons this has had to be done is the size of the fishing fleet. With such an enormous number of fishermen engaged, the limit of the catch which the conservation policy will allow is reached within a very short period, and this, I think, is a matter which the minister should seriously consider, namely the possibility of rationing the industry and reducing the number of commercial fishing licences issued during the fishing season.

Several hon. members have spoken of the conflict between power and fish in British Columbia, and I should like to underline what some of those who have spoken before me have said. I feel it is a very dangerous