



1950

International Commission  
for the  
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries



1970

---

RESTRICTED

Serial No. 2309  
(B.e. 69)

ICNAF Comm. Doc. 70/4

ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1970

Report of Interim Meeting of Panel A (Seals)



Serial No. 2309  
(B.C.69)

P.O. Box 638  
Dartmouth, N.S., Canada

14 January 1970

Report of Interim Meeting of Panel A (Seals)

Thursday, 25 September 1969  
ICNAF, Dartmouth, N.S., Canada

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman, Mr H.J.Lassen (Denmark). Representatives of the member countries of the Panel were present. A list of those present is attached as Appendix I.
2. Dr W.L.Ford, Director of the Bedford Institute, welcomed the members of the Panel and their delegations and offered the hospitality of the Institute. The Chairman expressed thanks on behalf of those present.
3. Rapporteur. The Chairman proposed and the Panel agreed that E.B.Young (Canada) should act as Rapporteur.
4. Agenda. A proposed agenda based on Canadian Proposals for Regulation of the Seal Fishery (Canadian Proposals attached as Appendix II) was discussed in the light of a letter to the Executive Secretary of 10 September 1969 containing Norwegian proposals (attached as Appendix III). At the suggestion of Mr Lund, the following agenda was adopted:

1. Length of catch season in 1970:
  - (a) Canadian proposal
  - (b) Norwegian alternative proposal
2. Other regulations concerning the seal fishery for the 1970 season.
3. Future regulations and proposals to consider for ICNAF Annual Meeting in 1970.
4. Other business.

5. Length of catch season in 1970. Mr Lund reiterated the view of the Panel during the 1969 Annual Meeting in Warsaw that more restrictive measures were necessary to maintain stocks at a satisfactory level. It was necessary to give close scrutiny to the problems involved. The Canadian proposal to establish a quota system during the meeting of the Panel in Warsaw was withdrawn and no substantial discussion was undertaken of measures which might be considered.

Dr Needler indicated that the reasoning behind the Canadian proposal was not to his liking. It was based on mass emotion rather than good, common-sense conservation. The Front area requires conservation measures and Canada still supports action in this regard. However, before the meeting in Warsaw, discussion with Canadian industry indicated the possibility of a proposal from them to reduce or even eliminate the taking of "whitecoats". If this were accomplished, it could well account for the conservation requirement, since when an open season beginning largely after the whitecoats had matured beyond that stage took place in 1968, the catch was within the sustainable yield figure. The Canadian position admittedly arises from a kind of hysteria, but Canada cannot help but be influenced by this when, as an example, the Canadian Ambassador in Washington alone had received 28,000 letters objecting to the 1969 sealing operations.

Mr Lund advised that Norway too had received many letters. He felt that the countries concerned had cooperated with the humane movement and provided information in every way possible, through regulatory measures, letters of advice to their Embassies, speeches in Commission meetings and the like. While he agreed that it was necessary to pay attention to the emotional outbreaks, he felt it was not possible or wise to let irresponsible, emotional people dominate our work. It would not be right to base our decisions solely upon the many letters received.

Mr Lund said the Norwegian proposal was based on information from their scientists. He reviewed the proposals (Appendix III) and referred to the fact that a whitecoat catch is necessary to ensure a continued profit and to keep a flow of the fast-furred whitecoat to the market. Mr Øritsland outlined the reasons for

the Norwegian proposal relating it to availability of stocks, pointing out that with a slightly later opening date (i.e. 15 March) the catch would not likely be much reduced.

Dr Needler indicated considerable concern about a March 12 opening date and the Canadian view that with good ice and weather conditions something close to sustainable yield could be taken in the first eight days of the season, operating almost solely on whitecoats. Moreover it was Canada's view that a diversion of effort to hooded seals and older harp seals during the closed period suggested by Norway might not be at all helpful from the conservation standpoint. Dr Needler added that it appeared that Canadian industry too felt the necessity for continuing some supply to the market for fast-fur whitecoats.

After a period during which Canadian and Norwegian delegations held separate meetings, the Chairman suggested that, as a compromise solution for 1970, it be agreed that delegations should recommend to Governments for the 1970 season an open season from 16 March to 23 April on the Front, for harp and hooded seals, with no closed period between those dates. Mr Lund stated the hope that Canada might see fit to open the Gulf season for the same period.

Dr Needler pointed out that there was heavy pressure from superior authority in Canada to press for the taking of no whitecoats in the Gulf, and that it would likely be necessary to postpone the opening date there to 18th or 20th March. Mr Lund stated that while he realized this he believed that Norway would wish if at all possible the same opening date in both areas. The open season for the Front was accepted by both delegations for recommendation to Governments by the delegations, with a notation to be recorded concerning Norway's view on the opening date for the Gulf.

Since there is no opportunity to propose the 1970 opening and closing dates through ICNAF before the sealing season opens, it was agreed that an exchange of notes would be effected between Canada and Norway, incorporating times of day for opening and closing as in the agreement between these countries for the 1969 season.

6. Other regulations concerning the seal fishery for the 1970 season. It was agreed that the regulations that were in effect in 1969, including those of Canadian-Norwegian understanding, should be continued. This is to be confirmed in the exchange of notes between Canada and Norway.

7. Future regulations and proposals to consider for ICNAF Annual Meeting in 1970. Mr Lund suggested that the Panel should discuss the future problems of regulation. He believed it necessary to consider from season to season the length of the catching season and specific opening and closing dates because of the many factors governing these. Moreover the ICNAF Annual Meeting time so soon after the close of the season makes it impossible to determine these matters during the meeting of Panel A each June. He stressed that early advice to other countries should be made of any proposal for important changes or introduction of new regulations, preferably by 1 February.

Mr Lund said that the scientific advisers to the Panel had recommended a maximum allowable catch as the most effective conservation measure. He suggested the following problems involved in quota systems:

1. Finding the right total catch
2. Whether there should be a quota common to Gulf and Front areas, or separate quotas
3. How to administer the quota between nations interested
4. Control and inspection.

He suggested that another method would be to limit the number of ships taking part in the fishery and outlined steps Norway was taking to prevent further development of participation.

Dr Needler agreed with views expressed and stated that the steps proposed at this meeting may well not reduce the catch to a sufficient degree. He said that a recent communication from the Canadian scientific group indicated that evidence of connection between Gulf and Front area stocks was inconclusive. From Canada's experience control and inspection of a quota system does not present major administrative problems.

Mr Lund indicated that Norway had withdrawn from taking seals in the Gulf, and expressed the view that this should be taken into account in any negotiation on sharing or division of a quota determination.

Dr Needler stated that in addition to determining maximum allowable catch it was important to decide on what benefits might be derived by a quota set below the figure.

The following items were suggested by Norwegian and Canadian delegations for discussion at the meeting of Panel A during the June 1970 meeting of ICNAF:

1. What is the sustainable yield?
2. Should it be based on two areas together or separately?
3. What would be the benefits or return at given amounts below the sustainable yield if catches were so established by quotas.

The scientific advisers to the Panel are asked to consider these points and to make recommendations to the Panel for consideration at its meeting in June 1970.

8. Other business. The Panel considered a letter received from the "Aktionskomitee gegen den Robbenmord", Postfach 2058, 3001 Bern, Switzerland, and referred it to the Chairman and the Executive Secretary for reply.

9. Next Meeting. It was agreed that the next Panel A meeting would be held at the time of the Annual Meeting of the Commission in 1970 in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.

10. Approval of Report. It was agreed that the report of this meeting would be approved by circulation of a draft among Panel members.

11. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 1655 hrs.

APPENDIX I

Interim Meeting of Panel A (Seals)  
Thursday, 25 September 1969  
ICNAF, Dartmouth, N.S., Canada

List of Participants

CANADA

Dr A.W.H. Needler, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Ottawa, Ontario  
Mr C.R. Levelton, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Ottawa, Ontario  
Dr F.D. McCracken, Fisheries Research Board of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario  
Mr E.B. Young, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Ottawa, Ontario  
Mr R.N. Gordon, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Mr R.S. Collie, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Mr S. Dudka, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Mr H.R. Bradley, Department of Fisheries and Forestry, St. John's, Newfoundland  
Mr K. Karlsen, representing Maritime Industry  
Mr J. Grieve, representing Newfoundland Industry

DENMARK

Mr H.J. Lassen, Ministry for Greenland, Copenhagen

NORWAY

Mr O. Lund, Directorate of Fisheries, Bergen  
Mr T. Øritsland, Institute of Marine Research, Bergen  
Mr. P. Karlsen, representing Norwegian Industry  
Mr Guttorm Jakobsen  
Mr Christian Rieber

APPENDIX II

Interim Meeting of Panel A (Seals)  
Thursday, 25 September 1969  
ICNAF, Dartmouth, N.S., Canada

CANADIAN PROPOSALS FOR REGULATION OF THE SEAL FISHERY

1. Opening dates the same as those effective by Canadian-Norwegian agreement in 1968, i.e. March 18 Gulf; March 22 Front.
2. A closing date of April 23, two days earlier than in 1968 and 1969.
3. Other regulations that were in effect in 1969 (including those of Canadian-Norwegian understanding) to be continued.
4. The additional regulation prohibiting the use of aircraft and helicopters in all areas, including the Gulf, for the taking of seals with the provision that aircraft could be used from land bases for spotting purposes only at an altitude in excess of one thousand feet.

(forwarded to the Executive Secretary of ICNAF  
under cover of Dr A.W.H.Needler's letter of  
17 July 1969)

Interim Meeting of Panel A (Seals)  
Thursday, 25 September 1969  
ICNAF, Dartmouth, N.S., Canada

NORWEGIAN PROPOSALS FOR REGULATION OF THE SEAL FISHERY

The Norwegian Delegation approves of the meeting place and time. The Agenda is suggested to be decided upon in the light of the following comments.

The Norwegian Delegation is prepared to discuss a shortening of the catching season as suggested by the Canadian Delegation. A postponement of the opening date by 10 days, however, will result in a change of the composition of the catches from mainly fur quality whitecoats to moulting pups which have a limited market. Accordingly this involves a decrease of the profitableness. It is therefore suggested that the catching time should be reduced by a closed season for harp seal pups from 20 to 27 March on the Front in which period the catch mostly consists of moulting pups, and further by a shortening of the sealing season to 23 April as suggested by Canada. This reduction of the catching time should not have less conservational effect than a later opening date.

It is also suggested an opening date for hooded seals to 20 March in order to save mature females.

Norway would prefer the same dates in the Gulf as on the Front, but is prepared to consider alternative dates in the Gulf at the meeting in light of the view of the Panel.

Accordingly the Norwegian Delegation suggests for consideration by the Panel the following regulations for the Front catch in the 1970 season:

1. Opening date for harp seals 12 March and for hooded seals 20 March.
2. A closing time for harp seal pups from 20-27 March both dates inclusive.
3. General closing date for the season 23 April.

(forwarded to the Executive Secretary of ICNAF  
under cover of Mr O. Lund's letter of  
10 September 1969)