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International Commission
for the
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries



1970

RESTRICTED

Serial No. 2376
(A.a.4)

ICNAF Comm.Doc.70/23

ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1970

Canadian Proposal concerning the Conservation
of Herring in the Convention Area

The Canadian delegation has watched with great interest the rapidly expanding herring fishery in the Convention Area. More recently, this interest has been tempered with concern and in some quarters with alarm at the rate of increase, coupled with lack of adequate assessment data to keep up with the expansion.

The Assessment Sub-Committee has also indicated similar concern and is giving warning that such uncontrolled and unassessed expansion is fraught with danger to the future of the fishery.

This expansion has been over five-fold in the last nine years from 179 thousand tons in 1961 to 951 thousand tons in 1968. The increase has been largely in ICNAF sub-areas 3 (south coast of Newfoundland; 4 to 145 thousand tons); 4T (southern Gulf of St. Lawrence; 19 to 117 thousand tons); 4X (southern Nova Scotia; 58 to 227 thousand tons); and 5Z (Georges Bank; 70 to 373 thousand tons). The scientists have not been able, as yet, to identify the number or geographical range of the separate stocks of herring involved. At the moment, it is suggested that the Georges Bank herring are related to those farther south in statistical area 6 and not to other ICNAF sub-area stocks.

In view of the economic consequence of a possible collapse of the herring fishery, Canada urges restraint in the further expansion of the fishery and recommends that the Commission prepare limitation catch quotas--perhaps not greatly different from present catches--to be implemented quickly should the need arise. The sizes of the quotas and the need for their implementation should be kept under review as circumstances change and new information becomes available.

Canada further proposes a joint meeting of Panels to discuss the Atlantic herring problem and the establishment of an ICNAF Working Group on Herring Research.