

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 13

Chairman—C. P. IDYLL, Chairman, Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute; Institute of Marine Science, University of Miami, Miami, Florida.

Shrimp Conservation on the High Seas

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IT'S A GREAT PLEASURE once again to attend the annual meeting of this Institute, not only to renew old friendships, but especially to exchange ideas on our great common interest, the fisheries of the Gulf and Caribbean.

I think it is only fitting that someone from the industry side of the room should express the gratitude of industry, not only to the Institute and its founders, but also to those seemingly tireless people, many of whom are in this audience today, who for years have worked hard in government, university and private laboratories doing painstaking and endless research and seeking answers to our problems.

We can only hope that we are giving and shall continue to give such people the support and cooperation they deserve, particularly in implementing their findings properly and beneficially. This is not always easy because we don't have all the answers. Probably we shall never have all the answers, about shrimp, for instance, so it's necessary that industry and science make the most of what has been developed, for the gradual improvement of our shrimp resources and the shrimp industry, and of course, this applies to all other fisheries.

Now this implementation of available knowledge has been going on for years. All of the Gulf States have shrimp conservation laws. Mexico, which shares the Gulf waters with us, has such laws. The regulations of these separate jurisdictions have been designed to meet the conservation needs of their own areas. Some such regulations have proven adequate, some inadequate, in meeting the problems they were intended to solve. Still the motive in each instance was a good one, namely, to achieve the management which is necessary to maintain the stock at its highest sustainable yield.

To date most of this effort has been directed by each state toward management of shrimp resources within its own jurisdictional waters and toward the fishing effort of its own citizens. But shrimping is no longer a localized operation. It has become common practice for boats of one state to follow the shrimp and fish in the waters offshore of another, and for years American boats have been fishing off the coast of Mexico. The time has come for the five Gulf States and Mexico to join together in a coordinated effort to apply conservation measures to shrimping in the Gulf waters.

How can this be accomplished? Because of the difference in conditions existing in the shrimp fisheries of the Gulf States, a single over-all formula for

shrimp conservation would be unworkable and impractical. The timing of periods for closed seasons would vary with geographical locations and species of shrimp. There is needed, however, reciprocity and cooperation between the states in the Gulf on such matters. Any restrictive regulations applicable to the fishermen of one state, such as the temporary prohibition of fishing in certain offshore areas, should be applicable to fishermen from other states as well. There would be no problem at all if small brown shrimp honored jurisdictional boundaries and obligingly stayed within the territorial waters of a given state. But they don't, and the state, having no power to legislate beyond its waters, finds its law ineffective. Such closed areas need to extend seaward beyond state jurisdictional boundaries to accomplish adequately the desired protection.

The five Gulf States, through their respective legislatures, could pass reciprocal legislation making the conservation laws of all Gulf States applicable to their own citizens. Since this problem exists in Gulf waters, off the coast of Mexico as well, and the Mexican shrimp industry already has expressed a keen interest in a joint solution, perhaps the matter there should be the subject of a treaty between our respective governments, as in the case of the Tortugas Convention with Cuba.

Certainly if the shrimp industry of any given state is willing to restrict its offshore fishing activities for conservation reasons, the fishermen of neighbor states should be willing to do likewise, for they will all share in the results of such a program.
