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## LETTERS

# to the editor

## Regulating lobsters

Sir:

I would like to comment on your statement (Lobsters, Warmed and Simulated; SN: 2/17, p. 169) regarding the maximum size limit in Maine and Saul Salla's computerization of certain assumptions. He has electronically arrived at the same answer which had been reached biologically many years ago. The assumption underlying the regulation was to protect motherhood.

The application of the assumption is biologically unsound even though it was excused on the grounds of economic validity. Proponents of the original bill were lobster dealers who alleged that during the depression they were losing money on the purchase and sale of large lobsters. Unfortunately, Dr. Herriek in his earlier publication, "The American Lobster," reached some invalid conclusions concerning spawn stock requirements of the species.

One of the obvious assumptions that has to be taken by one who believes fervently in the virtues of the maximum size limit is that coincident occurrences after the fact are causal results of the fact. Maine is the only lobster producing area in the world that has such a regulation.

Proponents of the regulation have attributed the significant increase in lobster landings in Maine to this regulation rather than to an end of the economic depression which afflicted the fishery between World War I and World War II. If we accept the assumption that there is a causal relation between the two, then we must also accept the same cause and effect for comparable increases in lobster production in the Canadian provinces and in northwestern Europe where the production of another species of lobster also increased. For example, the increase in catch in Maine during World War II was 169 percent, but the catch of the European lobster (*Homarus vulgaris*) in Scotland increased 172 percent during the same period.

It was quite obvious biologically that maximum size regulations had no influence on fluctuations in abundance in Maine or elsewhere. I reported the results of these studies well over a decade ago. No one in Maine who is biologically acquainted with lobsters considers the maximum size regulation as being anything other than an emotionally inspired regulation.

On another point: The optimum annual temperature listed should be modi-

fied by a statement, "As measured at Boothbay Harbor by the U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries." The bureau is very sensitive about omissions of this type. Also, the reference to optima is a relative rather than an absolute figure as you imply in your story.

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