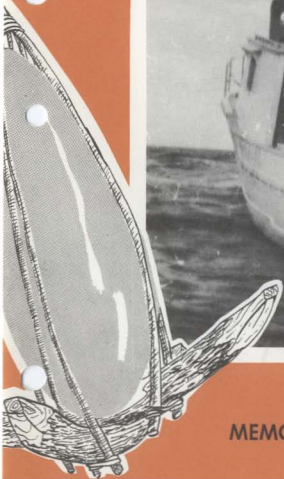


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A FISHERIES EXTENSION PROGRAMME



MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

Programme #6

April, 1965

Longlining for Porbeagle Shark & Swordfish

As many of our Newfoundland fishermen know, particularly those living on the Southwest coast, swordfishing has been carried on from Nova Scotian and Southwest coast ports for many years. The traditional method used to take these fish was by harpooning them. Consequently the overall production of swordfish remained comparatively low, and the price extremely high. Swordfish is, of course, noted for its delectable taste and for its food value. Many people prefer it to the Atlantic salmon. The fishermen's description of the flesh of the swordfish is that it in some ways resembles both halibut and salmon.

In the last four years there has been a complete change of the methods used to take these fish. During the last few years Norwegian and German fishing vessels have been making trips to the Grand Banks in large vessels equipped with longlining gear which they use to take

both shark and swordfish. Their operations were so successful that Nova Scotian fishermen and fishing firms adopted this longlining method for swordfishing. Within the last three years some twenty-five vessels in the hundred feet class have been adapted to or built for this fishery in Nova Scotia.

#### Markets & Prices for Swordfish

The market for swordfish has traditionally been a high-class one, and with the limited production by the harpoon method, prices were maintained at an extremely high level. It was quite common for fishermen to receive as high as sixty and seventy cents per pound. Today, however, with production increasing steadily, prices ranging from twenty-five to forty cents per pound are more frequently received. Nevertheless, at these prices the fishermen engaged in this fishery are making substantial incomes and the province of Nova Scotia continues to expand its fleet to prosecute this fishery. Most of the production is sold in a fresh state in the United States, and it is expected that

with prices at a level more suitable to a larger percentage of consumers, the demand is likely to continue to increase in the future.

Participation by Newfoundland in Swordfishing Operations

In addition to using the longlining method of catching swordfish the Norwegian and German fishermen have been engaged for several years in longlining operations for a species of edible shark known as the Porbeagle Shark. Having, by and large, exhausted this particular fishery resource in their own waters they have been, in recent years, taking larger numbers of these fish in the Grand Banks, St. Pierre Banks and Georges Bank areas. This, together with swordfish, has given them pretty lucrative fishing.

In 1960 the Newfoundland Fisheries Development Authority purchased a modern European longliner for the purpose of doing experimental work in deep sea longlining operations chiefly for cod.

It was felt that perhaps deep sea trawling operations as carried out at one time by our banking fleet might be modernized and revived by using this type of craft. This particular plan did not succeed so the boat was assigned to do experimental work on Porbeagle shark and swordfish operations.

This boat, named the "Beiner", is a large one in the two hundred ton class and is equipped with all the latest navigational and mechanical aids as well as a cold storage for bait.

#### Guests on Programme

On our January 17th programme we had as our guests, Captain Clyde Hollett and Mr. R. Schofield, the captain and engineer of the "Beiner". Captain Hollett has been in charge of this boat for the last three years and during that time has been longlining chiefly for swordfish but has also done some Porbeagle shark fishing. While it has been proved that Porbeagle shark can be taken in substantial numbers, no permanent marketing arrangements have been established for

sharks landed in Canadian ports. Sharks caught on two fishing trips were landed at North Eastern Fish Industries, Limited, at Harbour Grace. These fish were marketed in Europe but it would appear that no satisfactory arrangements have been made to market shark on a sustained basis.

The "Beiner" is presently sword-fishing out of Nova Scotian ports and doing quite well. Captain Hollett and his crew are working under the same arrangements as the Nova Scotian commercial sword fishing fleet. Forty per cent of the value of the catch goes to the government, as owner of the boat, and sixty per cent to the captain and crew. Captain Hollett is quite happy with this arrangement and reports that he and his crew are succeeding in making a comfortable living. Last year his crew netted approximately \$4,600. each and he expects that they will do as well or better this coming season. The engineer is a young man who spent two years at Dalhousie University and he says he is making more money swordfishing than he could any other way.

Their trips usually last about fifteen days and they sometimes land as high as 40,000 lbs. of fish for the trip. When this is sold at thirty or forty cents per pound it is easy to see that this fishery can be quite a lucrative one.

#### Methods and Gear Used

This trawling or longlining operation requires large amounts of gear. The "Beiner" crew uses up to two hundred, fifty fathoms ground lines which when set adds up to approximately 12 miles of trawl. The ground line used is 28lb. nylon and gengings or sids are made of 16lb. nylon. Hooks are slightly larger than those used for halibut fishing. The gengings are fastened to the ground line 2 fathoms apart. When the boat is fishing it is a twenty-four hour a day operation with the crew working in shifts. The trawls, of course, are afloat being usually only three to five fathoms under water. Swordfish and shark are usually found quite close to the surface particularly when feeding. Mooring buoys consist of large multi-coloured plastic floats on poles

ten to twelve feet long. These buoys are equipped with radar reflectors which enables them to be found in any type of weather.

The lines are hauled by a powerful mechanical gurdy situated on the starboard side of the boat opposite the forward hatch. The hauling operation is carried out in shifts of three men, each shift hauling about thirty lines of gear.

Areas In Which Most Swordfishing Is At Present Carried Out

During the winter months swordfish are found quite close to the gulf stream, as far south as Cape Hatteras. As the season progresses they move north along the New England and Nova Scotian coast and into the Southern Grand Banks area. They are also taken off the South coast of Newfoundland particularly in the Rose Blanche and Port-au-Basques areas. There hasn't, however, been a great deal of research work carried on, up to the present time, on the extent of the swordfish resource or their migration patterns. Scientists from the St. Andrews



biological station are engaged in research work on this species and often make use of the Beiner's facilities to do this. Captain Hollett is personally of the opinion that large numbers of swordfish will be found much further afield than the areas in which they are presently being caught.

Captain Hollett is quite ~~enthusiastic~~ about this type of fishing and says that it is a wonderful way to make a living. He has been engaged in fishing all his life from cod trapping to banking but feels that this type of fishing has all others beaten by a wide margin.

The crew of the "Beiner" come from various parts of Newfoundland and Captain Hollett reports that they are happy and contented with this means of earning a living. The "Beiner operates all year around except for an annual refit which takes approximately three weeks.

If you wish to comment on our programmes or newsletters our address is:

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