

tion of politics, despite predictions that such would occur. And what is equally important, I intend not to permit political interference, but rather to cooperate whole-heartedly with the two Commissions so that their efforts can be successful and not be thwarted by outside political interference.

The present Commission, handling tidewater questions, in the comparatively short time during which it has held office, has made substantial progress in its particular field. Naturally, its first concern was to acquaint the personnel of the Department with its determination to secure strict and impartial compliance with the conservation measures which have, from time to time, been enacted by the Legislature. In seeking to accomplish this objective, it has quite wisely endeavored to secure the whole-hearted cooperation of all those directly concerned in the industry, watermen and packers, and has held a number of conferences with these interests with this end in view.

Among the specific problems in which it has already achieved distinct progress, has been in the matter of the protection of the crab supply in the Chesapeake, by means of better enforcement of the provisions against taking undersized crabs and green or peeler crabs, thus eliminating a cause of great waste to the industry.

Of greater import, however, from the standpoint of conservation and a better livelihood for those engaged in the industry, has been the strict enforcement of the 5% oyster cull law. It is generally agreed, in the industry, that never before has there been such a general and complete compliance with this important conservation provision, or more thorough satisfaction on the part of all concerned, with the beneficial results that thus have been achieved. Already the commercial interests have responded commendably and have given cooperation after being convinced that the present program is being administered for their interests, as well as for the interests of the entire State.

The practical effect of the enforcement of this provision has been a very definite improvement in the standard of oysters being shipped to consumers all over the country from the Chesapeake area. This has brought an increased demand for Maryland oysters. It has resulted in a higher price being paid for their catch to the oystermen, be they tongers or dredgers. The Department conservatively estimates that this has meant an increase of income to the oystermen of the State of something over \$150,000 so far this season. But of still greater significance is the fact that the future supply of oysters is being insured by leaving the small oysters on the bars for further growth.

I have mentioned the question of law enforcement. It is very evident that no real or lasting progress can be achieved in the field of conservation unless there is respect for and compliance with the various conservation laws and regulations which have been or may be enacted and put into effect. It is of the greatest importance that the industry and all of the agencies of the State concerned, cooperate to bring about a general respect and regard for these laws and regulations. It is only fair and proper that the comparatively small number of our citizens who disregard these laws and regulations be held strictly accountable for their actions in order to protect the interests of the great majority of our citizens who conscientiously observe them. It is obviously not very sensible to consider what new conservation measure should be enacted until we have made completely effective those now on the books.

Our Commission has held several conferences with the conservation authorities of Virginia and North Carolina, looking to the solution of some of our