

the high flown oratory which the meeting produced, there was a clear call for resignation as a matter of principle. Many doctors present at the meeting thought that the profession would regard the decision to stop signing medical certificates and to refuse to participate in NHS committees as not going far enough, and Mr J. Elkington, chairman of the BMA's Hospital Junior Staffs Group Council, declared that resignation only meant resignation from the health service, and that doctors would go on looking after patients even if they worked for nothing and even if they starved. It will be interesting to see whether the referendum being conducted by the BMA will bear out the council's estimate of the wrath of the medical profession. Last weekend, the BMA sent about 50,000 forms to doctors, asking whether they would resign from the health service if the review body is not reinstated.

If the level of support for the BMA's recommendation that doctors should refuse to sign sickness certificates is any yardstick, then the council might be in for a shock. To be sure, the BMA claims that its sanctions are enjoying 100 per cent support in some areas, but the Department of Health and Social Security puts the figure at more like 75 per cent, and it seems that several doctors who originally refused to sign certificates have since changed their minds. There is also a clear call from the *Lancet* that the BMA should moderate its temper, and that "thoughts of organized resignation from the health service be banished".

What, then, are the chances of the doctors' militancy getting out of hand? One factor is that the effect of industrial action will be much less after the election than it was in the middle of the election campaign. In any case, there seems to be a substantial body of opinion even inside the medical profession that doctors are being greedy in sticking out for the full 30 per cent increase. As one consultant said in a letter to *The Guardian*, "I have been amazed at the irresponsible recommendations of the Kindersley committee: well might they resign."

## FISHERIES

### Sanity on Salmon

LIMITATIONS have at last been imposed on salmon fishing in the Greenland area, and in comparison with the restrictions agreed last month for the north-east Atlantic they are surprisingly strict. The prolonged international wrangle about alleged overfishing by Scandinavian drifters was resolved in Newfoundland this month at the annual meeting of the International Commission for North-West Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF), which decided that each member country should prevent either the tonnage of its salmon fleet or its annual catch in the north-west Atlantic from exceeding the 1969 size. This restriction covers all salmon fishing outside the three-mile limit around the coast of Greenland.

Because ICNAF cannot, according to its constitution, simply impose a maximum tonnage on a national fleet, the individual countries have been left with a choice, but the important point is that limits of one kind or another have been agreed. Several countries, including Britain, were dissatisfied when the counterpart body of ICNAF, the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFCO), decided last month

to restrict salmon fishing on the European side of the Atlantic to an eight-week season each year but not to stop the fleets from expanding (see *Nature*, 226, 678; 1970). The difficulty then was that any stronger proposal would have been outvoted by Denmark, Sweden and West Germany, and the group of countries, led by Britain and Canada, which had wanted a complete ban to protect their own stocks of salmon, had to be content with rather less than half a loaf.

The restrictions which were eventually agreed upon at the ICNAF meeting were in part the outcome of discussions between English and Danish representatives in the period since the NEAFCO meeting. In the final vote, the Danes, Swedes and West Germans came out in favour of keeping the catches down, and also approved of restrictions on the size of nets that can be used and on the length of the fishing season. Salmon are now to be fished only from August to November; this makes little difference to the principal fishery off Greenland, because the fish are not there at any other time of the year, but will stop the industry from making further inroads into the Davis Strait between Greenland and Canada, where salmon are around for somewhat longer.

Britain is, on the whole, happy with the decision, for in spite of the lack of clear evidence so far, it had been feared that British stocks of salmon might fall if the exploitation of the salmon's Atlantic breeding grounds continue to grow without check. The ideal remedy, that of banning the fishing of salmon on the high seas altogether, would never have been agreed to by the ICNAF meeting.

## CONSERVATION

### No More Blackbird Pie

SMALL birds will soon be able to fly fearlessly across the borders of Italy, for the Italian Minister of Agriculture, Mr Lorenzo Natali, intends to introduce a new law to forbid bird netting, a form of hunting that can account for the death of some 10 million migrant birds each year.

This decision, announced by the Italian delegation to the Council of Europe, is surprising because it was only in January this year that the Italian government gave way to one of its most powerful lobbies—there are about 1,800,000 hunters in Italy—and passed a Bill permitting the netting of small birds, thereby negating a Bill passed some three years earlier which had stopped netting in most of its aspects. The government argued that the new Bill was necessary to enable birds to be captured for scientific research—a claim strenuously denied by the Italian National Research Council—but it was clear that most of the netted birds would end up not in a laboratory but in pies or pâtés.

The Bill evoked an immediate outcry all over Europe; it seemed especially tactless that the Bill should be passed in the first month of European Conservation Year. Conservation societies voiced their complete opposition and many sent protests to the Italian government. The International Council for Bird Preservation, for example, urged people to write to Italian embassies and tourist boards to make their views known and the response to this plea was apparently world-wide. In Italy there was a strong body of opinion opposed to the Bill, and Dr P. L. Florio, senior