

Campanian should see Mr. Dutterworth, P.R.O., Royal York Bldg.
Mac Millan and Town Clerk's office in 30 mins then goes to beach. 10 am

NEWS CHRONICLE, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1953

Gulls fight invaders on the beaches



HUMAN BEINGS don't like the seaweed flies which are worrying officials. But seagulls do. Here at Southsea gulls by the hundred swoop over the shore feeding on the flies and their grubs.

T.V. done at.

BUT THE FLY INVADERS SIT TIGHT

NEWS CHRONICLE REPORTER

THAT plague of flies which has been threatening to ruin the South Coast as a holiday centre is reported to be seeping inland. Government officials are investigating.

The flies, which feed on, and breed in, seaweed, have so far defied all human efforts to exterminate them. And they defy, too, the seagulls which feed on them—they breed faster than the gulls can eat.

On Monday Mr. Harold Macmillan, Minister of Housing and Local Government, goes to Brighton to see the invasion of flies at close quarters.

He will be shown the methods which have been used—so far without success—to exterminate the flies.

Meanwhile Ministry of Agriculture experts are examining large scale attacks by fly-maggots on mushrooms in Kent and Sussex.

In the House of Commons yesterday the Minister of Agriculture said the mushroom-destroying fly had nothing to do with the seaweed fly.

BILLIONS

But nobody is quite clear which of the two species, both foreign to this country, is likely to be the most menacing infiltrator.

Coslopa Frigida—the seaweed fly, which has swarmed in its billions over 100 miles of the South Coast this summer—is a nuisance, but officials do not consider it a menace.

Megaselia Pluris Pinnosa—the mushroom-fly—is the comparative newcomer they are concentrating research on.

It breeds in the compost used for mushrooms and, as a maggot, attacks and destroys the mushroom-spawn.

"There is no evidence yet," said an official, "that it feeds on live plant-tissue.

"But what happens when it becomes a fly we have yet to discover.

TRENCH

"It may well be penetrating inland—but we do not believe it is a menace to anything but mushrooms."

Mr. Macmillan will see the seaweed fly in a specially-dug trench on Brighton beach.

He will be shown how it can live and breed four feet under the shingle—safe from the effects of cold weather.

And he will be told how it has defied extermination attempts in the past few months by helicopter-spraying and flame-throwing.

He will see a demonstration of present extermination methods—including spraying of shingle with insecticide, generating an insecticide "fog" to kill those flies in the air, and pumping insecticide through steel tubes sunk in the shingle to kill hibernating flies and grubs.

Mr. Macmillan's visit follows a deputation to his Ministry from affected areas. They were promised a "national and concerted approach to the problem of destroying the flies."

The seaweed fly does not bite and is not a menace to health.

But swarms have made beach picnics a misery, have blackened the windscreens of passing cars, invaded shops and hotels.

INLAND

"And," said Mr. R. S. Cross, Brighton's chief sanitary inspector last night, "I have had reports from several places well inland that these flies have been found there."

Little is known yet about its origin or life cycle. One theory is that it lives on a kind of seaweed now being swept to the South Coast by a change in the Gulf Stream.

During severe storms at Worthing as much as 60,000 tons of seaweed a day is deposited on the beaches.

Tailpiece: The seaweed fly has been seen in London.