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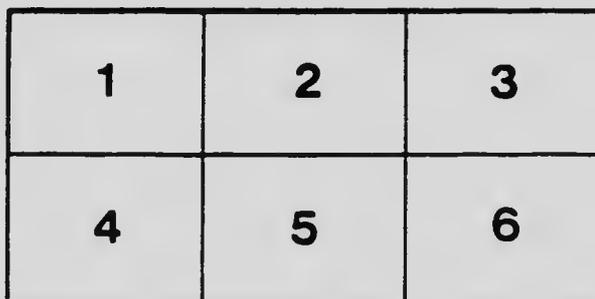
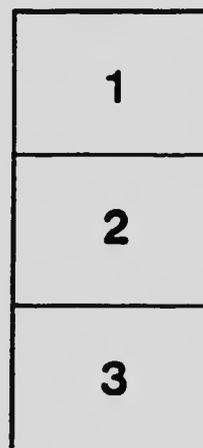
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House of Commons Debates

FIRST SESSION—ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

MR. GEO. H. BRADBURY

ON

MANITOBA FISHERIES

OTTAWA, THURSDAY, MAY 13, 1909.

Mr. G. H. BRADBURY (Selkirk). I wish to draw the attention of the House to a statement regarding the fisheries of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This is a very important question to a large number of my constituents, who are interested in the fishing industry, as well as to the other residents of these two provinces. It is important to my own constituency from the fact that a large number of my constituents depend for a livelihood upon the fisheries and important to the other residents of the two provinces from the fact that the manipulations of the American combine have increased the cost of fish to nearly double what it ought to be. Some fifteen or eighteen years ago those who knew lake Winnipeg and its wonderful resources were wont to boast that we had in that province the greatest whitefish fishery in the world, which promised an abundant supply of fish for all time to come for Manitoba and the other provinces of the west. Early in the seventies, a large number of Icelandic settlers were attracted to that lake largely on account of this great fishery. These people settled along the southwest shore of Lake Winnipeg, and, at that time, found no difficulty in obtaining white-

fish in large quantities in the southern part of the lake. They secured all the fish they required for domestic use and to supply at that time the market of Manitoba. This afforded these people plenty of food ready at their doors and promised a great future industry to the settlers, an industry from which these people, no doubt, expected to reap great benefit. But unfortunately for their hopes and for our great fisheries, the large commercial interests that had already depleted the fisheries in the lakes of Ontario were not long in scenting out this great fishery on Lake Winnipeg; and, as early as 1881, just as soon as railroad communication made it possible, we find these interests getting ready for the work of destruction which they have just about completed in that great lake at the present time. Mr. D. F. Reid and Mr. Clark, of Collingwood, were the pioneer fishermen of that day. Mr. Reid is one of the commissioners appointed to investigate the fisheries at this time. In 1881, he and Mr. Clark established operations on the south end of the lake and had no difficulty in securing an abundant supply of whitefish for the market at that time. In 1885 they put on a steam tug, and in one season put

up 150 tons of fish with a very small plant. This was the commencement of the export of whitefish from Manitoba. As soon as our fish reached the Chicago market, the great American interests were not long in realizing that there was magnificent whitefish in the western provinces. In 1886 we find established in that lake what was called the Manitoba Fish Company. But in reality it was an American concern, 96 per cent of the stock being owned or controlled by gentlemen living in Detroit. This company started operations in a big way. They had one or two steamers and a couple of tugs. They had their large freezers, one at Swamp island, one at Little Saskatchewan, and another at Selkirk. For two years this company, with the pioneer fish company, Reid and Clark, took from 1,200 to 1,500 tons of fish in that lake, nearly all of which were exported to Chicago and other American cities. These fish were cleaned and frozen as soon as taken out of the water and held in freezers until the winter and shipped out of the province during the winter season. The fish at that time averaged from 4½ to 6 pounds each. The men who caught the fish, our settlers, Icelanders principally, received from the American interests 1½ cents a fish. When I tell you that these same fish retailed on the markets of Chicago and other American cities for ten cents and twelve cents per pound, you will realize the immense profit that accrued to this American interest. As early as 1890, the possibility of the depletion of this great lake became apparent. Representations were made to the Department of Fisheries here by prominent men in Manitoba and by the settlers engaged in the business on Lake Winnipeg. Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, then Minister of Marine and Fisheries, was induced to send a commissioner to that province to make investigation. He instructed Mr. Wilmot, who was then commissioner, to proceed to Manitoba and make a thorough investigation of this question. I have in my hand the report made by Mr. Wilmot, and, for the information of the House and for the information of the minister, who, I know, is a very busy man, and not likely to have time to read these great reports, I intend to read a few passages:

Ottawa, October, 1890.

The Hon. Charles H. Tupper,
Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

Sir,—Having received instructions from you to go to Manitoba to examine into the condition of Lake Winnipeg fisheries, covering the grounds mentioned in certain correspondence regarding the alleged depletion of whitefish, and to investigate other matters connected therewith; and having carefully read the numerous files of correspondence, relating to the above subject, which have passed between the Departments of the Interior and of the Fish-

eries; and also having personally visited some of the most important fishing stations on Lake Winnipeg, mentioned in the aforesaid correspondence, I beg to report, for the information of your department, the following views which I entertain and the conclusions I have formed on the subject matter under consideration.

Lake Winnipeg lies partly in the two provinces of Manitoba and Keewatin. It is the largest and most important body of water in these provinces, with an area of some 9,550 square miles. Its extreme length takes in about 270 miles, and its greatest width is about 70 miles. It runs in a line nearly north and south. The southern half of the lake is very narrow, and largely cut up with small bays and inlets, and filled with numerous islands. The northern or upper half opens out to a width of some 60 miles, and covers nearly three-fourths of the whole area of the lake.

The principal product from Lake Winnipeg is the famous highly-priced whitefish, coregonus albus which, for domestic and commercial purposes, no doubt stands foremost on the list of fresh water fishes in America. These fish have been, and no doubt are yet, quite numerous in Lake Winnipeg, although it is held by many persons, and truly so, that in certain localities a depletion is already felt from the wholesale methods of fishing practised by certain fishing companies, who carry on this industry quite extensively almost wholly for the United States markets.

Much controversy has arisen regarding this alleged excessive fishing in Lake Winnipeg between these fishing companies and leading inhabitants of Manitoba, and also with the settlers and Indian tribes around the lake, which has culminated to such a degree at last as to call for the serious consideration of the Departments of the Fisheries, and of the Interior to investigate this matter from a disinterested and public standpoint, not only with regard to the above issues, but also in the interests of the general public.

It is therefore of vital importance to all concerned that some practical solution should be reached by which, if possible, the fishing industries of Lake Winnipeg should not be speedily impoverished, but should be maintained as a source of wealth, and luxury for the inhabitants generally of Manitoba, both for the present and future.

There are several separate interests connected with the fisheries of Lake Winnipeg which are dealt upon somewhat lengthily in the departmental correspondence referred to—each claiming that the views held by them are the correct ones, in so far as the question of depletion of the whitefish in the lake is concerned. These different interests may be classed as follows:—

1. The Indian tribes under the control of the Department of the Interior claim that, many parts of the lake which formerly supplied them with the requisite abundance of fish-food are now showing depletion by reason of the excessive and wholesale fishing carried on by certain large fishing corporations.

2. Prominent officials and leading citizens of Manitoba also represent that Lake Winnipeg is undergoing a falling off in many localities of its former whitefish crop, and that, therefore, means should be instituted to stay this

too rapid destruction of fish by judicious regulations, which, whilst protecting the fish, will not too seriously interfere with the fishing industries of the country.

First.—“The Indians, and the interests of the Department of the Interior.”

Voluminous evidence is given in the correspondence showing quite conclusively that the Indians on some of the reserves around Lake Winnipeg are suffering from the want of their former supplies of whitefish, which in past years were obtained readily and in great abundance; and notable instances are related where waters which at one time were teeming with these fish have now become very scarce, and fears are entertained that the usual supplies of fish-food for the Indians will soon be at an end, and that this has been brought about by over-fishing at the mouths of rivers by fish traders, who are permitted to carry on this excessive fishing regardless of consequences. It is also represented that unless this reckless system of fishing be discontinued these Indians, who are the wards of the government, will have to be supported by other means from the public funds of the country.

These are no doubt pressing facts, and must be so considered from an uninterested and practical comprehension of the state of affairs as they now exist. It is therefore expedient that the government should meet this subject in the spirit of reciprocity; as between the requirements of the Indian, the settler and the fish trader each have their rights and are entitled to full consideration as inhabitants of the country.

Second.—The statements made by prominent individuals and leading inhabitants of Manitoba are, that over-fishing of the whitefish in Lake Winnipeg is being experienced, and is steadily increasing, and that it should be stayed, in the interests both of the present and incoming inhabitants of Manitoba and the Northwest, and that the whitefish industry should be studiously husbanded. This advocacy for the preservation of the fishing wealth in Lake Winnipeg by the leading inhabitants of Manitoba should be sustained by the Department of Fisheries, in order to prevent a repetition of said experiences which are now felt in many of the waters in the eastern provinces, where over-fishing has brought depletion to such an extent as to be almost wholly beyond recovery.

Formerly this industry was pursued in the lower or southern parts of the lake; but the catch becoming much lessened there the fish traders have established themselves about midway up the lake, and at Selkirk island, at the head of the lake. The principal points for their operations at present are at Beren's island, Reindeer island, and the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan river, about midway of the lake, and at Selkirk island, near the mouth of the Big Saskatchewan, at the north end. Other places may be only temporarily fished; but the above named localities form the present headquarters of the fishing companies.

At Beren's island a good natural harbour is formed on the southern side. Here the two principal firms have each extensive ice-houses and freezing-houses, also landing piers for

their steam-tugs and barges; similar works, but less extensive are at Reindeer island and at Selkirk island. But the most extensive buildings and works are just at the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan river, where two companies each have large ice-houses, freezers and piers on either side of the mouth of this river, which is only about 100 yards wide.

The present mode of fishing by the companies is with gill-nets, which are fished at certain distances off the shores of these islands, varying from one to six and ten miles, according to the 'running' of the whitefish, as it is termed.

If severe storms prevail, which is very often the case in the open lakes, these nets cannot in many cases be lifted until the winds subside, which may not be for several days, in which case the fish in the meantime die, partial decomposition sets in, and they become unfit for use, and the whole catch, sometimes amounting to many thousands, are thrown away. Great destruction is caused in this way, and a question has arisen whether it would not be better to do away with the gill net and substitute the pound or trap net under certain regulations, as the pound net would not only save the fish which are lost by the gill nets, but would also raise the standard of the whitefish generally in the markets of the country; whereas it is now somewhat lowered by the many fish which are offered for sale that are unwholesome for food, by reason of the diminished fish whose injuries and defects are hidden by the freezing process. The pound net would no doubt be very acceptable to the fishing companies generally, not only to obviate the difficulties above mentioned, but on account of being less expensive in their general working.

The quantity of gill nets set in Lake Winnipeg in 1889 covered about 60 miles in length. These gill nets, though apparently small, and averaging but 6 feet in depth, are nevertheless from their many miles in length where set, very deadly engines, and capable of causing great havoc in circumscribed limits, such as small bays and rivers. As an evidence of this it may be stated here that in Lake Winnipeg, where only three fishing companies are carrying on the fishing trade, the quantity of whitefish reported to be shipped by one firm alone in 1889 amounted to 9,000 boxes of 130 pounds each, making 1,170,000 pounds, the other two companies making up a similar amount, thus showing that this small number of traders are capable, with the present improved methods of fishing, of capturing upwards of two and a quarter millions of pounds of whitefish in Lake Winnipeg during one short season alone, the greater portion of which passed directly out of the province, causing the home consumption of Manitoba and other parts of the country to be only sparsely supplied, and at high prices.

This taking of upwards of two and a quarter millions of pounds of whitefish by these fishing companies in Lake Winnipeg, more particularly that portion of the catch taken at the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan river, must, in the common sense reasoning of things, go to show, that originally intended halauce of nature regarding these fish is being largely interfered with, and to such an extent

if continued, as to cause well grounded alarm for a rapid decline of the whitefish industries connected with Lake Winnipeg, and many of the tributary waters belonging to it. And it must be understood, also, that the above described quantities of whitefish only include those taken by these three fishing companies operating in Beron's, Heindeer and Selkirk islands, and at the Little Saskatchewan river, irrespective altogether of the supplies that are caught by all other fishermen, Indians and settlers in other parts of the lake during the whole fishing season of the year.

The following questions relating to the whitefish fisheries in Lake Winnipeg being submitted for my consideration are herewith answered serially:-

1. Whether there really exists a depletion of whitefish in the waters of Lake Winnipeg? There is a gradual but steady depletion of the whitefish product of Lake Winnipeg going on, from the effects of the present system of fishing in certain parts of the lake.

2. If so, in what waters, and what are the causes of it?

The depletion is experienced more particularly at the mouths of the larger rivers, and in the lower parts of the lake, particularly in the Little Saskatchewan river and St. Martin's lake, caused by over-fishing at improper times, notably at the mouth and bay of the Little Saskatchewan river. This cause, if permitted to be continued here, and to be allowed in other places similarly situated in other parts of the lake, must assuredly hasten rapid depletion and eventually termination of the whitefish industry of Lake Winnipeg.

3. What are the remedies?

The remedies are to reasonably restrict the wholesale fishing now carried on by the fishing companies, by judicious regulations, and to wholly prevent these companies, and others, from fishing in certain well known localities, where the whitefish congregate in great numbers prior to the close season and preparatory to their breeding time.

Mr. Wilmot, who was then the Commissioner of Fisheries, reported that if these companies were allowed to continue taking such great quantities of fish out of the lake each year the waters would surely be depleted. After the evidence contained in this report and the findings of the commission it would be only reasonable to assume that the Fishery Department would have seen to it that fishing on the scale then in vogue would have been checked. Instead of that we find that these large commercial companies were allowed to increase their operations and instead of two fishing companies there were four or five large commercial companies operating in that lake. The result is, as Mr. Wilmot predicted, that the lake is rapidly becoming depleted of fish.

Mr. BRODEUR. Is my hon. friend not aware that the recommendations contained in that report were adopted by the department?

Mr. BRADBURY. No, the recommendations in that report were not adopted. Some of the recommendations were adopted, but the chief recommendation, that commercial fishing should be checked, was not adopted. The recommendation as to defining the boundaries where commercial fishing should be allowed was adopted, but even that has been violated by the fishing companies within the last two years by fishing in Pinygreen lake.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

After Recess.

House resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. BRADBURY. Mr. Speaker, at six o'clock I was drawing the attention of the House to a statement of the quantity of whitefish taken out of Lake Winnipeg from 1890 to 1907 by the commercial companies. I will not weary the House by reading the full statement but will content myself with making one or two quotations from this statement and, with your permission, I will hand the statement in to 'Hansard.'

	Whitefish Whitefish Sturgeon Lake shipped from		
	Winnipeg.	Manitoba.	Lbs.
1890	2,250,000		
1892	3,058,790		
1893	3,873,000		
1894	2,370,000		
1895	2,659,000		
1896	3,470,860		
1897	3,270,000		
1898	2,537,000		
1899	1,906,000	3,499,520	444,787
1900	3,895,000	5,843,000	981,500
1901	5,000,000	7,270,000	600,000
1902	6,000,000	7,914,500	600,000
1903	7,000,000	9,100,000	600,000
1904	6,000,000	8,800,000	600,000
1905	6,500,000	8,000,500	600,000
1906	5,000,000	6,136,000	325,000
1907	2,000,000	3,695,000	177,000

In 1892, when Mr. Wilmot, the then commissioner, made his report, they were taking 2,250,000 lbs. of white fish out of Lake Winnipeg. Mr. Wilmot at that time pointed out clearly that if this continued, within a very short time, Lake Winnipeg would be depleted. We might naturally have expected that the department at that time and since would have endeavoured to curtail the quantity of whitefish that was being killed in Lake Winnipeg, but, instead of that, we find that year after year this amount increased until, in 1903, there were 7,000,000 lbs of whitefish taken out of Lake Winnipeg by the American fish combine. In all during these seventeen years this American combine took out of this lake about 68,000,000 lbs. of whitefish and there was a total shipment from the

province of Manitoba of 84,000,000 lbs., the balance being taken out of Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis. In addition to that there were 5,320,000 lbs. of sturgeon. This valuable fish, I may say, is almost extinct in Lake Winnipeg. The lake has almost been depleted and the reason for that is that it takes a very long time for sturgeon to mature. It takes about twelve or thirteen years for a sturgeon to reach the weight of from 10 to 15 lbs. We have had sturgeon taken out of Lake Winnipeg that weighed 125 lbs.

Mr. HENDERSON. How old are they?

Mr. BRADBURY. Some of them are seventy years of age.

Mr. HENDERSON. That is a fishy story.

Mr. BRADBURY. While these figures show the amount of fish put up by the large American fish combines, they do not begin to account for the amount of fish killed by the methods employed by the American fish interests and by other commercial companies. It is well known that the method of fishing in Lake Winnipeg is by the gill net. We have had as much as sixty miles of gill net stretched in Lake Winnipeg at one time by these commercial companies. During the month of September we have as a rule, very stormy weather. There are days and days when the fishermen cannot visit the nets. The consequence is that the nets are killing fish all the time. Some of these nets are swept away from their moorings and lost, and, going floating through the lake, the most deadly engine one could imagine, killing fish and polluting the water as they pass through the waters until they are thrown up on some beach where hundreds of tons of fish lie rotting, and pollute the water. This, Sir, is one of the greatest factors, and, I may say, it is the greatest factor in the depletion and destruction of our once great whitefish industry in Lake Winnipeg. Unfortunately for our fisheries and for our settlers along Lake Winnipeg, almost immediately after Mr. Wilnot had made his report and had pointed out the danger to the Lake Winnipeg fishing industry from the methods practised by the large combines, he retired from office being then an old man and a man of very great experience. Mr. Wilnot had been in the employ of the government for many years and he had been under, I believe, the best deputy that the Department of Marine and Fisheries ever had. I am speaking of the late William Smith. He, Wilnot, understood what these interests had done along the shores of the great lakes in Ontario, he knew what their methods had resulted in and he knew that they would result in similar destruction in Lake Winni-

peg. He pointed out in his report, in a very specific and clear manner, what these companies were going to do in Lake Winnipeg if not restricted, and it is remarkable that the department did not act more vigorously upon that report. He retired as I have said just after making this report, and the gentleman who was appointed to fill his position was the present commissioner, Professor Prince, a man who came to this country from the old land entirely ignorant of the conditions that prevailed on Lake Winnipeg, entirely ignorant of the methods practised by the American fish interests and entirely ignorant of the results of those methods on the Ontario lakes. Consequently, when he came to Manitoba he was handicapped in such a way as to make it almost impossible for him to realize that there was any great danger of the depletion of Lake Winnipeg by the methods practised by the commercial interests. No doubt this idea was created and supported strongly by the then resident inspector of fisheries. I speak of the late Latouche Tupper. I know it is an old maxim, which I intend largely to follow to-night, to always speak well of the dead, but to do justice to this subject I must tell the House the truth regarding what I believe to be the cause of the depletion of that great lake. Mr. Tupper was inspector, and if he had been a paid official of that great American combine he could not have done more to assist in the destruction of the fishery of Lake Winnipeg than he did. Every move that was made to check the killing of fish by the American fish interests was countered by this inspector. He had the ear of his minister at Ottawa on account of his official position and he apparently had the ear of the officers in the department and every move that was made to check this American fish interest was countered by this man and by the influences that surrounded him.

I regret, Mr. Speaker, to have to say that representation after representation was made to the Department of Marine and Fisheries pointing out the destruction that was going on, but it seemed impossible to reach the ear or obtain the sympathy of the department. Settlers along that lake who had been induced to settle there largely on account of the great fishing industry that was promised had petitioned the government time after time praying for protection, but it seemed impossible to get the department to take any action. That cannot be very much wondered at perhaps when we realize that for years, on both sides of the Speaker, sat gentlemen who were stockholders and supporters of the American fish interests. We had up to a very few years ago members on both sides of this House who were stockholders or agents of the American fish interests. Consequently, you can well

understand how impossible it was for the provincial settlers to get the ear of the department or of the minister. This is a regrettable fact but I think it has had considerable to do with the destruction of the fishery, I am speaking now of, what I know. In 1893, when these settlers had exhausted every resource that they could command to obtain justice from the Department of Marine and Fisheries, being well acquainted along the shores of that lake and being in business myself, not in the fish business, seeing the destructive methods that were practised by the American interests and the great destruction that had taken place in our fisheries, I came to Ottawa and took the matter up with the then minister, Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper. I became interested in the matter largely because of the fact that the American fish interests, not satisfied with controlling our fisheries and taking fish out of our lake to the extent of millions of pounds illegally, were endeavouring to crush out of existence the two small Canadian companies that were then operating on the lake. This was their *modus operandi*: there was a duty of a quarter cent a pound on all fish imported into the United States from Canada, but a clause in the United States Customs Act provided that any fish taken in Canada in nets owned by American citizens would be admitted into the United States free. The Booth Fish Packing Company of Chicago, that great octopus which fastened its tentacles on every fish producing sheet of water in Canada, received the advantage of this provision of the United States customs law as it owned the nets and plant of the Robinson Company of that time and when the fish of the two Canadian companies got to the border line it was met with the duty and handicapped to that extent in the Chicago market. In this way the Americans were able to dictate prices and terms to the Canadians. The result was that in 1899 they succeeded, with their control of the Chicago market in crushing the two Canadian companies out of existence. In that year the Selkirk Fish Company and the Reid and Tait Company sold their business to the Booth Fish Packing Company, or as it was called in this country the Dominion Fish Company, but it was Canadian in name only, the stock being almost exclusively owned by the Booth Fish Packing Company of Chicago. Since that time the Booth Fish Packing Company of Chicago have practically controlled the fishing in Lake Winnipeg, right under the eyes of the officers of the government they have taken from 1,200 to 1,500 tons of fish annually out of this lake, although it was pointed out in 1890 that if they were allowed to continue taking out two and a

quarter millions of pounds of fish annually the lake would soon be depleted. In 1900 through the efforts of some very prominent Liberals in Manitoba who knew something of the conditions that prevailed on Lake Winnipeg and who had fought side by side with myself and others in trying to prevent the destruction of this lake, sufficient pressure was brought to bear on the present government to remove the then inspector Latouche Tupper. In his place the government appointed a man from whom everybody expected great things in the person of Mr. F. W. Coleleugh, an old resident of the town of Selkirk, a man who had been engaged in the fish business himself and who knew every bay and every inlet, on the lake, and every settler on its shores. When Mr. Coleleugh assumed office we expected that the American Fish Company would receive a check, but we failed to realize the power of this great combine. Within less than two years this man who tried to do his duty by the country and by the settlers was practically forced out of office. Every recommendation he made to the department at Ottawa in the way of restricting the American fishing interests from killing the fish, was either ignored or side tracked so that he failed entirely to make any improvement in the conditions. Mr. Coleleugh was not only a prominent citizen but he was a prominent Liberal; he had represented a Manitoba constituency in the local legislature for many years and the settlers along the lake had great hopes that he would see justice done to them. Now, in order to prove that Mr. Coleleugh was true to the people and true to his trust, and that he saw eye to eye with Mr. Wilmot, who realized that these great American fish interests were destroying Lake Winnipeg, I shall read some strong representations to this government contained in a report of Mr. Coleleugh made on January 15, 1900:

Selkirk, January 15, 1900.

Hon. Sir Louis Davies, K.C.M.G.,
Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

Sir,—I have the honour to report as follows on the fisheries of Manitoba, for the year 1899, and to enclose herewith statistical returns for the same period.

This season in the matter of catch and all other respects, may be said to have been an average one, some lakes showing an increase in output, and others a proportionate decrease.

The fish companies continue to move their plants northward, and this year their operations were carried on within a short distance of the northern shores of the lake, and I understand they contemplate another move to Norway House and Playgreen Point on the northern coast. To my mind this is *prima facie* evidence of the depletion of these waters. Fully 90 per cent of the catch of all our lakes goes to the United States and finds a market there at good prices. Last spring I had a wholesale price list from the Detroit Fish

Association, which I am told, is one of the tentacles of the great American octopus, the fish combine, and this list quoted our whitefish at 8 cents per pound wholesale, and our sturgeon at from 9 to 14 cents, while fine dressed trout taken from eastern waters was only quoted at 5½ cents.

Now, I want to give you the reports of two of his officers on the lakes:

1. Officer Magnusson of Arnes, on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg, reports a decrease in the catch of fish in his district, as compared with last season, and says that winter fishing was a failure. He reports close seasons and other regulations well observed in his district and closes his report as follows: 'In my opinion the lake will surely be depleted of fish in a few years if the companies are allowed to fish as at present.'

Angus McKay, one of the oldest men on Lake Winnipeg, a man who was in the employ of the late government for many years as Indian agent at Beren's river, makes this report:

2. Angus McKay, Esq., of Beren's river, late Indian agent at the point, has resided there for over twenty years, and has always taken a lively interest in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the community, and now writes stating that the lake is being rapidly depleted of both whitefish and sturgeon, and urges the government to pay heed to it before it is too late. I may add that this opinion is shared by all disinterested parties who have given this matter any consideration.

Mr. Coleclough also makes the following report to the deputy minister, which with your permission I will not read, but hand in, as I do not wish to take up the time of the House. After a lengthy report he says:

In conclusion permit me to say that I have given the matter of our fisheries considerable study, and consulted hundreds of settlers, and people who have no interests, other than the best interests of the province to serve, and all are of opinion that lake Winnipeg is being rapidly depleted of both whitefish and sturgeon and that even one more season's fishing such as last year, and a few preceding years, will be disastrous.

In verification of this let me state that the only whitefish now left in the lake are within from 20 to 25 miles of the most northerly parts. Last season over twelve hundred tons were taken under commercial licenses by the Dominion Fish Company, most of which were caught within 25 miles of the outlet of the lake. Then it must be borne in mind that all fish which pass over Sea Falls never return. The first mentioned fishing was done in the south portion of the lake near to the mouth of Red river, where whitefish were very plentiful, then they moved gradually northward to Swampy island. When these grounds were fished out, they then moved to Reindeer island where they fished so long as it was profitable, and then shifted to George's island, and later to Horse island, the most northerly island in the lake and all commercial fishing was carried on last season between this island and the north shore of the lake.

At this moment gangs of men are engaged building ice houses and making other extensive preparations on the northern shores of the lake in the vicinity of Warren's landing, and Playgreen lake, preparatory to operations there this winter and next summer, and as I said before, if fishing is permitted for another year on such a scale, it will prove a serious matter to the people of this province.

These reports prove conclusively that Mr. Coleclough saw eye to eye with Mr. Wilmot, and did all that any man could do to save the fisheries of Lake Winnipeg, but the officials of the department and I fear the minister himself lent a deaf ear to his reports and recommendations; and after struggling for two years with the department to secure justice for the settlers of Lake Winnipeg, he gave up the fight in disgust, and resigned. The position was then filled by a man taken out of a hardware store in the town of Selkirk, a man who knew no more about fish than the average member of this House knows about watchmaking. I have no hesitation in saying that it was on the recommendation of the head of the fish combine in Selkirk, the president of the Dominion Fish Company, Captain William Robertson, that Mr. Young was appointed to that position. While a very estimable man, Mr. Young at that time was thoroughly ignorant of the fisheries. It is a very grave question whether he knew a whitefish from a tullibee, or a tullibee from a pickerel; but he was just the kind of a man who suited the great American fish interest. As he knew nothing about the fisheries, he could not see where these great companies were destroying the fisheries of Lake Winnipeg. Coming in right on the heels of Mr. Coleclough, a man who had years of experience in the fisheries, and who had resided at the headquarters of the fisheries at Selkirk, ever since they were started, Mr. Young made a report, and I wish to quote a passage of it to give you an idea of the position he took in this matter. His report to the Dominion Commission of Fisheries, Ottawa, is dated Selkirk, March 18, 1902, and in it he says:

As was foreshadowed in the preliminary statement published in last year's report, the returns show an increase in the quantity of fish caught and exported over the year 1900.

Whitefish have been very plentiful, so much so that some of the companies got all the fish required in about six weeks or two months fishing. I am pleased to report a yield of 1,364,000 pounds over the preceding year's, which goes to show that we have still an abundance of whitefish in our waters at any rate; I can say so with regard to the waters of Lake Winnipeg.

I just want to point out how easily a man may be misled. I do not believe that Mr. Young realized, when he made that report, how misleading it would be to the department. He states that there is abund-

ance of fish in the lake in the very season when the companies had nearly doubled their plants, doubled the number of boats in use, more than doubled the number of men employed, and consequently more than doubled the power to kill the fish and chase them into the deep waters. These things account for the apparent abundance of fish, and Mr. Young does not take them into account in making his report. It merely shows how well this large trust had fortified itself. Reading the report of Mr. Young, the average man would suppose that Lake Winnipeg fishery was in a flourishing condition, that there was really no danger of its waters being depleted, while the facts prove that the lake to-day is depleted from the south end to the north end. One proof of this is to be found in the fact that in the early days the average whitefish taken out of Lake Winnipeg was from four and a half to five pounds weight, whereas the average taken last year by the American fish companies was less than two pounds weight. According to the law and the regulations of the department, no fish of less than two pounds weight is to be taken out of Lake Winnipeg; but I make the statement here that the average fish taken by the American fishing companies last year was not over two pounds, so that there must have been a large number under two pounds to make that average. In the season of 1907 the catch was very poor, and the inspector, reporting under date of Selkirk, June 1, 1908, speaks of it in the following language:

It will be noted that there is a large falling off in the production of whitefish, while the apparatus used was practically the same as that used the previous year. In the first place the season was a month later than usual in opening up, it being about the 1st of July before any fish were taken. Throughout the summer season the weather conditions were very unfavourable for successful operations of the fisheries, which created a shortage in the catch. My observations lead me to believe that the shortage was entirely due to the above cause, and not from depletion of the fishery. I have no doubt but that when the weather conditions are favourable for successful operations the fishery will redeem itself.

That report coming from the Inspector of Fisheries in the face of the fact that the average size of the fish had fallen from 4½ and 5½ to 2 pounds, is conclusive evidence that the officials of the Fisheries Department have not been as zealous as they might have been in the protection of this great fishery, and not willing to admit that the lake is depleted greatly. A few years ago, when we who took an interest in this question and were trying to convince the Department of Fisheries from time to time that this lake was being depleted, and made statements to that effect to any of the officials in charge, we were met almost invariably with the reply that we

were endeavouring to kill a great industry. The idea that this fishery belonged to the people of Canada and ought to be protected for our own settlers and our own people never seemed to enter the minds of these officials. Their whole aim seemed to be to do everything possible to encourage these great commercial companies to export our fish to the American market. The idea never seemed to suggest itself to them that this fishery ought to be protected and kept for the people of our western country.

I want to be as brief as possible, but I desire to put this matter on record in such a manner that the minister and this House will understand something about the conditions which have prevailed on Lake Winnipeg during the last fifteen or eighteen years; and to do so, it will be necessary for me to give a short resumé of the operations of these commercial interests since their establishment. As I have said this lake was depleted right under the eyes of the departmental officers. Any one, having as much experience as I have had on this question, would almost think that these men had been hypnotized by these great interests and were consequently unable to realize what was actually taking place. In 1881, Messrs. Reid and Clark, two fishermen from Collingwood, started to fish in the extreme southern part of the lake, right opposite Big island. At that time that part of the lake abounded in fish. Its waters were teeming with magnificent specimens of whitefish, by long odds the best ever taken from any waters on this continent. Right alongside where they were fishing was a settlement of some 3,000 Icelanders that settled there early in the seventies. These Icelanders expected that they would be allowed to carry on a great industry and reap the reward which would have been theirs had these commercial interests not been allowed to come in and practically steal what really belonged to our own people. This great settlement had no difficulty up to 1890 in obtaining all the fish they required in the southern part of the lake, not only for their own use but for the Manitoba market, which was not then very large. In 1882, Reid and Clark moved their plant a little farther north to Bull Head, still in the south end, and caught an abundance of fish there. In 1885 they put on the first steam tug that was ever used in these waters and put up 150 tons of fish. This was the commencement of the export trade of whitefish from Manitoba to the United States. Soon the wealth of this lake became known and in 1886 the Manitoba Fish Company—Canadian in name only—96 per cent of its stock being held by Americans—began operations on Lake Winnipeg and built a large plant at Swampy island, Reindeer island, and the Little Saskatchewan. In 1887, the Booth Fishing Packing Company of

Chicago, that great vampire which has sucked the heart's blood out of our fishery, came into operation under the name of Wm. Robinson. This gave the lake over entirely to these American interests, but in 1889 the Selkirk Fish Company, a purely Canadian company, started operations and established their plant in the north end of the lake at what is called Selkirk or Horse island. In 1892 Reid & Clark started operations also on Horse island. In 1894 we find that all these other companies which had been fishing in the south end of the lake, off Swampy island and Reindeer, had depleted these waters and moved to the north end and were fishing off Horse island. In a few years they took from that sheet of water surrounding Horse island and Big Saskatchewan from 1,500 to 1,800 tons of whitefish annually, 90 per cent of which were exported to American markets. In 1898 the Booth Packing Company of Chicago secured absolute control of the lake and have controlled it ever since. There is one point I want to bring to the attention of the minister, and that is that, under the laws of Canada, this great American combine had no status in our waters. They had no right to fish in Canadian waters, but they succeeded in evading the laws by forming what they called the Dominion Fish Company. Every official, however, in the Marine Department, as well as the inspector at Selkirk, knew that the Booth Fish Packing Company of Chicago were the real owners of the plant at Lake Winnipeg. In face of the law which states distinctly that every company or individual, before it can secure a commercial license to fish in Lake Winnipeg, must be composed of British subjects and be the actual owners of the plant, these men were enabled through their agents, to take the oath and secure a license which made it possible for them to destroy the greatest inland fishery this country had, or ever will have. You would suppose, Mr. Speaker, that this fact would have caused an investigation by the Fishery Department years ago. There is no question but that the Commissioner of Fisheries knew it as well as I did, because the attention of the department was drawn to it from time to time. But the department seems to be powerless to interfere to protect our settlers against the encroachment of American poachers. After depleting Lake Winnipeg from the south end clean up to the north end, from Big island, Swampy island, Reindeer island, and moving out to Horse island in the north, we find them at the northeast corner of Lake Winnipeg six or seven years ago, and they have been fishing there continually ever since, so that that part of Lake Winnipeg is very near depletion at the present time. When I made the statement a moment ago that the fish

taken out of that part of Lake Winnipeg last year did not average more than two pounds weight, it will be clear to every man of this House what the condition of the fishery is at the present time in that lake must be.

When Mr. Wilmot made his report in 1900 he pointed out that certain parts of the lake should be protected, and he furnished a map to the department, which is contained in his report which I hold under my hand, setting aside certain waters in which he thought no commercial fishing should be allowed. This I believe was observed fairly well up to within a year or two ago. But a year or two ago we find that commercial fish interests, after the season had closed on Lake Winnipeg, operating in waters known as the Playgreen lake, and that part of Lake Winnipeg—because it is really a part of the lake—was protected according to the map that Mr. Wilmot had furnished to the department. Now this was not done unknown to the department, it was thoroughly aware that the companies were fishing in Playgreen lake, their attention was drawn to the fact but no effort was made to stop them. I want to point out that during the last 15 years, under both political regimes, the Fishery Department has not given to the settlers on Lake Winnipeg the protection they had a right to expect for that great industry, or an industry which was formerly great. When I state that Lake Winnipeg is depleted to-day, it is a statement I have made from time to time during the last three or four years, not from hearsay, not from what I have read in the newspapers, but from what I know. I have been acquainted with Lake Winnipeg on and off for 26 and 27 years, and I want to say that during that time I have never had the value of a five cent piece invested in the fisheries on that lake. So my action here to-night does not arise from any pecuniary interest, but altogether on account of the public interest. The fact remains that our fisheries have been depleted by the commercial companies.

But, Sir, it will be hard to get one of the officials, either at Selkirk, where you have an inspector, or in the department here, to admit that Lake Winnipeg is depleted. They will tell you that Lake Winnipeg is not depleted. We have the inspector stating in 1907 that he did not believe Lake Winnipeg was depleted, and that in the face of the fact that these commercial interests have moved from station to station, year after year, during the last 18 years, until now they have established themselves on the northeast corner of Lake Winnipeg. If their former haunts have not been depleted, why have they travelled 270 miles to get fish elsewhere. They have gone this great distance simply because they have taken out all the fish in the lower part of the lake.

Surely it is time now that something should be done, that some drastic measure should be taken to protect this fishery. It is high time that this farce which has been going on should end and that we know the truth regarding the lake. We have men at the present time investigating that matter. They compose the second commission that has been appointed to investigate the fisheries in Lake Winnipeg.

Just here let me give the minister a little history of the first commission, which may save him perhaps from some little deception that may be practised through the present commission. In 1894 I made a report to Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper that American companies fishing in those waters which were allowed to use 20,000 yards of nets, that they were fishing double that amount and were destroying the lake fisheries, and that the waters of the lake were being polluted by dead fish. My statement was combated by the then inspector, Latouche Tupper, who, as I said before, was in hearty sympathy apparently with the American interests. The consequence was that I induced Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper to grant a commission, and he appointed a lawyer in the town of Selkirk, and gave him instructions to go to the lake during the winter time and take the evidence from all the fishermen that were engaged in this great fish company. This lawyer went on and made a report, which I think is in the department, in fact, I have seen it within the last three or four weeks. It is composed of a couple of hundred sheets of foolscap typewritten. Every man that was examined proved conclusively every statement and every charge that had been made regarding the manner in which the American fish interests were operating on that lake. Now, what happened? In the spring of the year when these poor men came off the lake, men who had been robbed of a great industry, men who had to work or starve, when they came in to obtain employment from the great American combine, they were met at the door of the office by one of the men who had a copy of the report of this commission in his hand, and he would say to these men: 'John, you swore so and so to Mr. Elliott; you cannot work any longer for the fish company if you talk like that; you made a mistake.' Consequently he took that man upstairs and made him swear just the reverse. Ninety per cent of these men were made to contradict their former evidence. I presume that report is in the department here, and was filed to counteract the effect of the other report. I make this statement here to-night so that it may help the minister to be on his guard in regard to the investigation that is now going on in

Manitoba, and so that he may take measures to make it a fair and impartial one. I was reading some of the evidence that was taken at Winnipeg, and I want to draw the minister's attention to it. I do not know what power this commission has, but I notice that every man who is examined in Winnipeg, and I think also in Selkirk, were all of them either owners of or stockholders in these fish companies, or men directly interested in the large fishing combine. There was not one man who had the interests of the public at heart, that is, the interest of the settlers, who was examined in either of these cities, and this is a very important fact. Some of the evidence given by Mr. Guest I have under my hand; he is a fish dealer in Winnipeg, a member of what is called the Northern Fish Company. He states that the Northern Fish Company is purely Canadian. Well, I am sure the minister knows and the department knows that a majority of the stock of the Northern Fish Company belongs to what is called the Buck Eye Fish Company, and the Buck Eye Company is controlled by the Booth Fishing Packing Company of Chicago. Consequently, the Booth Company controls the Northern Fish Company just as much as it does the Dominion Fish Company on that lake. But that man swears before this commission that that company is purely a Canadian company. Now, Sir, evidence of that kind should be a warning to the minister, and I hope his commissioners who are taking this evidence on Lake Manitoba will be in a position to cross-examine these men. I do not suppose that the paper gives all the evidence, but I do not notice, in reading the whole of the evidence then given that there has been any cross-examining done. Men have been allowed to come forward, simply make their statements and walk out of the room. If that is the class of evidence that the commission is going to secure I want to say to the minister that he will be very much disappointed with the result. I believe that the present Minister of Marine is anxious to do what he can to protect the fisheries. I have that feeling and I hope I will not be disappointed.

There are one or two other items that I want to call the minister's attention to. First, I want to say a word as to the sturgeon fishery. This, at one time, was a profitable industry on Lake Winnipeg, but the same interests, the American fish interests, came in and depleted that fishery. We find that while they were able to get from 600,000 to 800,000 pounds of sturgeon in a year and were able to do it year after year the best they could do last year was to secure 170,000 pounds. This proves conclusively that the fish is almost extinct on that lake. This is a serious question for our

Indians upon that lake. We have a large number of Indians along that lake and the depletion of our fisheries, in addition to being an outrage upon the people of those great provinces of the west, is a great hardship to the poor Indian who has to travel miles and miles to get enough fish to feed himself and his family. In the old days an Indian could set his net any place along the lake and get any fish he wanted. Today, he cannot do that. These waters are depleted to such an extent that he cannot put up the fish that he used to put up for his winter's supply. The sturgeon was a very valuable fish. We, in Manitoba, never realized the value of this fish. The Americans came into our waters, however, and they have made a great deal of money out of sturgeon. The Indian or settler who caught this sturgeon, received, as a rule, 75 cents or \$1 at the most for a sturgeon weighing from 75 to 125 pounds. These fish were taken to Chicago and sold from 9 to 14 cents a pound. The caviare that was got from the product of these sturgeon was a very valuable product in addition. Consequently, the Americans have reaped a very great harvest out of our great inland waters. It does seem strange to me that the Canadian government have been almost powerless to protect our waters from the American fishermen. I could well understand the difficulty along the international waterways, but there should surely be no difficulty in great lakes like Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Manitoba. They are in the heart of our own country and we surely should be able to keep the Americans from coming in and taking the fish from under our nose. We have, during the last 15 or 18 years, been simply hewers of wood and drawers of water to the great American interests. The settler who came into that country in the early days and who ought to be wealthy to-day, as a result of the existence of these great fisheries, is struggling for a living while these American trusts have been allowed to make hundreds of thousands of dollars out of the fishing industry.

I would just like to say a word or two here regarding the province of Saskatchewan. We have no great lakes there, but we have a lot of small ones. These lakes are being rapidly depleted. I know this is not the report that the minister gets. I have read the reports that have come in from his inspectors, but, I would refer the minister to the evidence given at Selkirk by one Mr. John Morrison. He swore that he had fished at Turtle lake, which is a small lake in Saskatchewan, and that he had taken out ten carloads of whitefish last winter. How long do you think that lake can stand that class of fishing? The inevitable result of commercial fishing in these small lakes is that they will be depleted within

a short time. I enter a plea to-night for the settlers of that great province. Those people who are going in there in thousands and, I hope, by hundreds of thousands, will require all the fish that these small lakes will yield. That is the fresh fish supply for that province as Lake Winnipeg was to Manitoba and her sister provinces. I think we have a right to ask the government to protect these fisheries and see to it that the fish are kept not only for the residents but for the coming residents of these great provinces. This is an industry which gives employment to perhaps 50 or 60 men during the winter time. They receive a very small sum for the fish they take, just enough to pay for their labour and nothing for the fish. They get their wages and that is all they get while the American Fish Company get the fish. Our people who want fish in Manitoba to-day are paying nearly double what they ought to pay for fresh fish. This is true of Winnipeg and other towns throughout that province. When I tell you that fresh fish in Winnipeg commands the same price, or just about the same price, as the same fish in Chicago and other American cities you can understand how great a hardship it is to the people of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

With regard to the Sturgeon question I omitted to refer to Lac du Bonnet, a small lake on the Winnipeg river. It is really an extension of the Winnipeg river about 9 miles long and having an average width of 2 or 3 miles. It is a great sturgeon breeding ground. That ground has been protected and I notice by the report of your officer—the one thing that I have noticed from the report of any official of the department regarding the fisheries of that country that meets with my approval—was a statement commending the policy of protecting that little lake Lac du Bonnet, pointing out that it was teeming with sturgeon that it was a reservoir or breeding ground and ought to be protected. I know there is a very strong effort being made—and I know the minister knows—to secure a license to fish that lake. I trust that the minister will carry out the policy that he has inaugurated and not allow any commercial companies or even any settlers to fish that lake for export purposes. I strongly urge the minister—and I believe that what I say now will be very popular in the province of Manitoba—to prohibit the export of sturgeon from Canada. Sturgeon are very scarce and should not be exported from Canada. A short season might be allowed during which the settlers living along the lake might be allowed to take sturgeon for the home market only.

An important question arises in connection with the settlers living along the Red river. There are along that river a large number of old settlers. These men have

lived there all their lives and have always enjoyed the right to take fish at any time during the year, but under the present law they are not allowed to take fish during what is called the close season. Very few fish go up that river and all the fish the settlers take during the season would not amount to as much as one of those great fish companies would take out of Lake Winnipeg in one day. I shall cite one case to illustrate the great hardship sometimes caused by the enforcement of the law. In the spring of 1897 an old woman, about 80 years of age, went down to the river to try and get a fish. Many of these settlers, it must be remembered, are very poor. This old woman had a little scoop-net and was fishing with it along the shore when one of the zealous inspectors of the department came along, saw the old woman trying to take fish during the close season, took the net and broke it across his knee. The old woman said: 'You might as well take a stone and knock my brains out as leave me to starve.' That is a hard case, but there are many quite as bad. I wrote the minister a letter upon this subject as follows:

January 28, 1909.

Hon. L. P. Brodeur,
Minister Marine and Fisheries,
Ottawa.

Honourable Sir,—I beg to draw your attention to what has proved to be a very great hardship to many of the old settlers along the bank of the Red river, that is, the enforcement of a closed season for the taking of fish in the Red river by the settlers who fish only for their own consumption. This has proved to be, as I said above a great hardship, especially to many of the poorer families—this applies especially to the spring of the year. I would therefore suggest and urge that you cause the law, which restricts the settlers along the bank of this river, between the Catholic mission, 7 or 8 miles north of the town of Selkirk and the northern limits of the city of Winnipeg, to be annulled,—that all settlers between these points be allowed to fish at any season for home consumption only. This change cannot have any very bad effect as all the fish taken by the settlers for this purpose does not amount to as much as to what one of these fishing companies would take out of the lake or at the mouth of the Red river in one day,—while on the other hand, the change that will enable those poor settlers to catch fish for their own table, as they have been in the habit of doing for fifty years before this law was applied by your department would prove a great blessing to these people.

Trusting that you will see your way clear to meeting this request, I am,

Yours faithfully,

I received a reply signed by Mr. Venning, one of the officials of the department. I do not wish to speak harshly of the officials but I have always felt that the officials of the department did not extend to the poor

settlers of that county the sympathy that they should. Mr. Venning says:

The minister directs me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th ultimo, requesting that so far as that portion of the Red river between Catholic mission and the north limits of the city of Winnipeg is concerned, the fishery regulations be so arranged as to allow the settlers at all times of the year to take fish for their own use, and I note your opinion that the amount taken would be so small as to have no ill effect on the permanence of the fishery.

In reply I may say that the fishery regulations are framed with a view to imposing the least possible restrictions on the fishermen compatible with the permanence of the fishery and the experience of the department is to make it very loath to countenance any fishing whatever for a particular kind of fish during the close season provided for its reproduction.

While the department would regret very much to have to cause hardship to any of the settlers it fails to see why it would not be possible for such settlers to be able to provide themselves with sufficient fish for their own use under the ordinary domestic license, the fee on which is only \$2, during the regular fishing season.

This letter comes from one of the officials of the department and shows how little sympathy they have with the hardships that prevail along that river. These people enjoyed the right to take these fish long before we as Canadians had any right to a foothold in that country, and it seems a great hardship that we should go in there and allow our great corporations to kill fish by hundreds and millions of pounds and ship them out of the country and at the same time deny to those poor people the right to catch enough fish to keep body and soul together. So I enter a plea with the minister and ask him to see that this privilege is granted to these settlers from this date on. It must be remembered that these men do not sell the fish, what they take are simply for their own use, and surely they should be allowed to catch enough for their own consumption.

The question of fish culture is one of great importance to the settlers along that lake and deserves careful attention. It is an industry requiring very skilful management but I regret to say that the hatcheries in Manitoba have been conducted carelessly, wastefully and inefficiently. I believe that when the minister realizes what has really taken place along the southern end of the lake he will endeavour to repair the great wrong that has been done to our settlers. I believe that the depleted fisheries can be repaired to a great extent through the use of hatcheries properly manned and managed, although little can be accomplished with hatcheries conducted as those in Manitoba now are. A hatchery was built at Selkirk many years ago, under the late government more as an experiment than anything else. We have in

charge of that hatchery a man who knew nothing about fish culture, who had driven a dray in Selkirk for 20 years. He was taken from that position and put in charge of the fish hatchery, and yet the department expects good results from a hatchery of that kind, managed by a man who knows practically nothing about fish culture. What happened? Two years ago, although the government had spent over \$10,000 in trying to secure spawn in Lake Winnipeg their efforts were abortive simply because the man in charge did not know his business, and did not understand the taking of spawn. The hatcheries at Selkirk and at Lake Winnipeg were closed. A consignment of spawn was sent from Ontario to keep the hatchery going, but when it reached Selkirk, through the ignorance of the man in charge, the spawn was allowed to spoil and the hatchery was again closed. Even when it is successful as it was this year, the management is imperfect. At Selkirk, when the young fry are ready and must go into the water, the water is unfit for them.

The Red river is clear of ice three weeks before Lake Winnipeg; the temperature of the river rises rapidly and the fry have to be deposited, and when they are discharged the water of Red river is extremely muddy. It is safe to say that not ten per cent of the fish from the hatchery ever live to reach Lake Winnipeg. Everybody knows this, the department knows it. To-night from my place in this House I put in a plea that the hatchery be removed to where it will do some good. I suggest that it be placed on Big island or some other point on the south end of Lake Winnipeg, and if that be done it will to some extent help to remedy the great wrong perpetrated, and to replenish the waters in the south end of the lake. There is no question that if there was a hatchery placed on Big island or somewhere on the south end of the lake that within the next four or five years we would have abundance of fish there, for the settlers at least. Two or three years ago we spent \$24,000 in building a hatchery at Beirns river and although Mr. Jackson, the late member for the county promised the settlers at the south end that the hatchery would be built on Big island, the influence of the great fish companies was too strong and they had it located on the north end of the lake so as to help to produce fish to keep that American combine supplied. What I set out to say was that that hatchery lay idle all last year, because, through the bungling of the men employed to look after this delicate business of fish culture, no spawn was secured. Not one of these men in charge of the hatcheries has had any experience. The inspector of hatcheries at Selkirk is a very fine fellow himself, but he is a lumberman who attends to his lumber business in Selkirk, and he knows no

more about fish culture than I do about making a watch. That is the kind of men that is placed in charge of the fish culture of the province of Manitoba, and is it any wonder we have had such results? The man in charge of the hatchery at Beren's river was a friend of the late member, Mr. Jackson, and he was taken off the farm to be put in charge there. If we are to succeed in replenishing that lake with fish, if we are to get any value for the thousands of dollars we have spent, it is absolutely necessary that competent men should be put in charge. I trust that the report of the commission will be a comprehensive one, and that it will enable the minister to judge of these matters himself and not be dependent upon his officials. Now, Sir, I have endeavoured to place this matter as fairly as possible before the House. There is no politics in it or there ought to be none, but unfortunately at times politics do get mixed up in it and politics have a good deal to do with the destruction of our lakes. I have tried to place the matter fairly before the minister in the hope that I may induce him to grapple with the question and to remedy the evils that exist. Our Manitoba fisheries are a great natural resource of the province and they ought to be well guarded. There are a large number of citizens in my own constituency who depend largely for a livelihood on the pursuit of this industry, and the fall and winter fishing on the lake is quite an important enterprise. There is no danger to the fisheries from winter fishing because every time the net is put into the water it is taken out again with the fish that are in it, but in the case of the summer fishing miles and miles of these nets are often torn away and they go sailing through the lake killing and destroying the fish as they pass along and polluting the waters. I ask the minister to see that the commission which investigates this question will not be content with taking the mere statements of certain people, but that they will have power to subpoena witnesses and cross-examine them so that a true knowledge of the conditions on Lake Winnipeg may be obtained and an adequate remedy applied.

Now, in conclusion, allow me to again press upon the minister the absolute necessity of erecting at once an up-to-date hatchery on Big island. This end of the lake has been thoroughly depleted of whitefish for commercial purposes, and as it is the portion of the lake where the large Icelandic settlement reside, it ought to be replenished at the earliest possible date. That the lake has been depleted is evidenced from the fact that the companies are to-day paying 3½ cents per pound for whitefish that they used to pay about one-quarter of one cent per pound for. A great wrong has been done to our settlers and to our residents, not only of Manitoba and of all the Eastern provinces, where our

magnificent whitefish ought to come, but on account of the manipulation of our fishery by American interests, Canadians have to pay double or nearly so for their own fish than they ought to. I therefore strongly urge upon the government the wisdom of an up-to-date system of hatcheries on the lake, especially in the south end, placed under the management of experts in fish culture, and a thoroughly Canadian policy, from this date, regarding the companies that are allowed to fish. As far as possible, the fishing ought to be husbanded for our settlers; their fall and winter fishing ought to be preserved, and every encouragement ought to be given to this kind of fishing.

Tuesday, May 18, 1909.

Mr. G. H. BRADBURY (Selkirk). Mr. Speaker, before the House goes into Supply, I wish to call the attention of the hon. Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Mr. Brodeur) to an editorial in one of the Winnipeg papers on the statement he made in the House in reply to some remarks I had the honour to make in this House on the 13th of the month. I stated at that time that Lake Winnipeg was being depleted. The minister, in reply, said that the reports showed that Lake Winnipeg was not being depleted. I am going to quote just a few sentences from the Winnipeg 'Tribune' of the 14th instant. This is a paper that has been in touch with this question during the last fifteen or sixteen years and is thoroughly competent to speak upon the subject:

DEPLETION OF FISHERIES.

Hon. Mr. Brodeur said the reports showed that there was no depletion of the fisheries of Manitoba.

At the moment when he spoke those words, witnesses were giving evidence before his own fisheries commission at Gimle, the headquarters for many of the fishermen on the lake. The report says:—

The majority were in favour of the lake being closed for whitefish in the southern portion until the fish increased sufficiently in numbers to make it profitable and that the closed season for domestic fishing licenses should commence on August 15 for summer fishing.

A few years ago in the southern portion of the lake, the waters fairly teemed with whitefish; fishery stations were in operation, and remained in operation until the devastation was almost complete. Then they were closed. And yet the Minister of Fisheries stands up in parliament and says:

The reports showed that there was no depletion of the fisheries of Manitoba.

Take further testimony given before the fishery commission yesterday:

Rev. J. P. Solmundson, secretary of the fisherman's union, was the last speaker. He claimed that United States capital was the direct cause of the depletion of the whitefish

in Lake Winnipeg, and while he was in favour of fishermen being allowed longer nets and Canadian-financed firms doing business in the northern part of the lake where whitefish were still quite plentiful, he objected strongly to American capital under Canadian names securing the product for the American market.

The fact is that the American capitalists have in the majority of instances, been in league with friends of the government. The old, rotten system of placing the country's resources at the disposal of friends, is at the bottom of the depletion of Lake Winnipeg and other western inland waters. Friends, as they are called of the government have had a tremendous rake-off in this business, and the protests of the whole people have been ignored.

This is from the 'Tribune' of May 14, the morning after I had the honour of addressing this House. Now, for the purpose of convincing, if possible, the hon. minister that Lake Winnipeg is in a depleted condition, I wish to read from another important report, made by a man who is entirely impartial, taken from the report of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police for 1907. This is an extract from the report of Inspector E. A. Pelletier, of a patrol from Regina to Churchill and return, in the winter of 1906-7. It is as follows:

Regina, March 11, 1907.

With regard to fishing companies:—

I take the liberty of suggesting that by what I heard and what I believe some restrictions should be made in the extent of their operations.

The fish caught, I hear, is mostly all exported to the United States market, and it is foreseen that soon there will be hardly fish enough left to feed the natives and their dogs. If some law could be passed to forbid the exportation of fish caught in the Keewatin district, outside of Canada, it would benefit the country a great deal, for at this rate the fish will soon become extinct or practically so. Something like it is in Lake Superior, Lake of Woods, and is getting in regard to Lake Winnipeg, which is getting fished out.

Fishing companies are operating as far as Lake Tipiwesh. The new railway coming in from the Pass will come through a country of good fishing lakes.

Fishing companies find it even profitable to haul fish some 100 or 150 miles from railway transportation with horses. One can easily imagine if a railway ever comes through to Fort Churchill to what extent the country will be exploited by these fishing companies, and as these lakes are of comparatively small size it will take very few years indeed to drain them of all their fish, and then the natives will be left starving if a poor year of fish comes. As it is now, they can always fall back on fish after everything else fails.

Even then this country is growing now at such a rate that if no restrictions on the export of fish are made at an early date there will be no fish left for our own consumption.

Evidence of this kind, coming from a man

who is entirely impartial, who has no other interest to serve than the public interest, ought to impress the minister that there is something wrong. The hon. gentleman seemed to take exception to the statement I made regarding the laxity of the officials of his department.

Mr. SPEAKER. The hon. gentleman cannot refer to a previous debate.

Mr. BRADBURY. I am very sorry I cannot. However, there seems to be some difference between the hon. minister and myself regarding the position these gentlemen occupy. Either the officials of the department have been derelict in their duties regarding the fisheries of Lake Winnipeg or the minister of the department has counteracted their recommendations. If the officials have been honest, and have notified the government from time to time of the facts, then the government must take the full responsibility for the destruction of these great fisheries. There is no question that Lake Winnipeg is in a depleted condition to-day. The hon. minister quoted from the report of one of his officials, who, as I pointed out, has from time to time made reports which were contradictory and therefore not reliable. However, I am going to read for the minister's information an extract from the report of 1906 of the inspector at Selkirk, the gentleman whom the hon. minister quoted the other night.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order.

Mr. BRADBURY. I do not like to irritate the hon. gentleman, but I wish to place this report on record, in the hope that it may open the eyes of the hon. minister to the fact that reports made by the inspector at Selkirk are not altogether reliable. In this report for 1906, the inspector states:

I would just say in conclusion, that the year 1906 has been, on the whole, a very successful one, considering that the weather throughout the year was very unfavourable, for the carrying on of fishing operations. In some cases nets were set from four days to a week without being lifted and fish taken therefrom. This of course had a very bad effect on the fishing as a good many of the fish deteriorated before the nets could be lifted and in consequence were unfit for the market. It is a hard proposition to overcome this loss as

long as gill nets are used for the capturing of fish in our waters.

Fish of all kinds are very plentiful except sturgeon and whitefish, both these valuable fish seem to be getting scarcer every year. The setting apart as a breeding ground the waters of the Winnipeg river was a move in the right direction, and will be a benefit to the fisheries of our province as long as it is kept closed to commercial fishing. The waters of the Winnipeg river are teeming with young sturgeon.

The common whitefish in our waters seem to be getting scarcer every year at any rate they are harder to locate during the fishing season than they were a few years ago.

I wish to draw the attention of the minister and employee to the fact that his own inspector as late as 1906 pointed out that Lake Winnipeg was in a depleted condition and that the fish were getting scarcer every year. I do not intend to take up the time of the House further than to say that I hope the minister will be guided by the reports which I have tried to lay before him, honestly and fairly, without any political bias, and will see that they are looked into by the Fish Commission. I fear very much that that commission is not going to accomplish the work for which it was appointed, because I have noticed in the reports of the papers that one of the managers of the fish companies against which I have been protesting, is following that commission up from place to place giving his evidence at different places and no doubt influencing the men who come before the commission. There is no doubt that the evidence given before that commission is being secured to a very large extent by this man. All I ask is that the people have a fair chance to put their case before that commission. As I pointed out to the minister this morning in private conversation, unless the witnesses are subpoenaed by the commission, the evidence will not be properly secured from the standpoint of the people. The companies will take good care to have their evidence placed before the commission, but there is no one looking after the interests of the people, and consequently I am afraid that if the commission do not subpoena witnesses and cross-examine them direct, the inquiry will not be a fair one, and will not accomplish the result which it was designed to accomplish.

