

fishery regulations—and when an officer has incurred the ill-will often of his neighbours and former friends by catching the fisherman in the act of breaking the law—he brings him before a magistrate only to find that the sympathy of the community for the fisherman is represented in the breast of the magistrate, and a nominal fine, by no means deterrent, is imposed, and the same infraction of the law continually occurs. Now, then, all I would claim is, that admitting that in every district in Canada cases can be brought showing laxity on the part of our officers, and showing room for improvement, yet we have been accomplishing much in the past few years. While a great deal of the money spent on the protection of the fisheries is practically lost, because of the difficulties in the way of the officers, or the carelessness of the officers, who receive so small a reward for their services as fishery officers in general do receive, yet we have accomplished a great deal of good, as may be gathered from the annual report of the department. Take, for instance, the Georgian Bay, to which reference has been made. During a very short time the *Cruiser*—a boat by no means fitted for the work, as experience has shown—has destroyed miles of nets, and we have been enabled to do with that *Cruiser* what it was found impossible to do by the hired vessels previously. In former years these fishery officers, placed over a very large area, were in the habit of going to great expense in fitting up a special tug for a special trip, and the result was that an enormous bill was run up for camping outfits, &c., and not a poacher was caught. The men who were violating the law got the news in advance, and before the fishery officers could reach them the offenders had gone away. The *Cruiser* has to a great extent stopped that. It has not been stopped to the extent I should like, but certainly the log of that ship, during the short time she has been at work, has been very satisfactory; and I believe that of late there is evidence to prove that the effect of that has been wholesome; it has come to be understood in the district that it is not safe to violate the law. The hon. member for West Lambton spoke at considerable length with respect to gill-nets and pound-nets. That subject has been very extensively treated in the annual reports of the department. The hon. gentleman referred to the report of Mr. Charles Wilmot, who made a very careful enquiry into that subject, and whose report I have caused to be inserted in the annual report, in order that I might, if possible, obtain the very views which have been expressed to-day, and that the department might have the co-operation of the gentlemen representing the large and important districts interested in the solution of the question. Hon. gentlemen will see in the deputy's report to me a review of the suggestions of Mr. Wilmot; and it is not denied that there has been great destruction and loss of fish, both from gill-nets and pound-nets. The loss in the case of gill-nets is nearly always after a storm. If there has been rough weather, the gill-nets being placed, as they generally are, at great distances from shore, and the owners' boats not being able to reach them, the fish caught by the gills in these nets die, and become useless for any purpose; so that a great loss, of course, occurs—a loss not only of the fish, but of the spawn. It has also been found, in the case of pound-nets, that immature fish in great numbers have been taken. But there is some exaggeration on this score. While what

the hon. gentleman says is true, that these fishing engines are dangerous, we must remember that the fisherman, on the other hand, claims that he has a right—and outside of our legislation he certainly has—to devise the best ways and means of accomplishing his object, that is, to catch the fish he desires to sell out of common waters in the most convenient and least expensive manner possible. We have to meet that spirit and deal with it, and no legislature hitherto has attempted to throw any difficulties in the way of fishermen, unless after the most careful and thorough enquiries it is discovered beyond all cavil that some restrictions are necessary. I speak with great diffidence of these inland waters. We have not the same difficulties to face on the sea coasts. The experience of some of the neighbouring states shows us that these land-locked waters, which were formerly full of fish, will, in course of time, become exhausted. It is entirely different on the sea coasts, because the deep-sea fish can almost defy, as they have done for many years, the ingenuity of man. The pound-net is a device that was invented in the United States for similar waters to those to which reference has been made to-day, and our fishermen naturally have adopted the means which have been so successful in the waters of the United States. One of the difficulties met with in dealing with this question, particularly in two of the large lakes to which reference has been made, Lakes Huron and Erie, is the claim that in the waters contiguous to the United States it would be unfair to unduly hamper in that respect Canadian fishermen, who have to compete with American fishermen a few miles distant; and while Americans allow all such devices, such as pound-nets and gill-nets, as will take the fish in the quickest possible manner, any greater restriction imposed upon the Canadian fisherman would result in more profit going to his American competitors. That is not altogether a tenable argument; but to some extent it has force, and the Government in that regard have endeavoured, unsuccessfully as yet, to ascertain whether it is not possible to have a joint action with those states bordering on the great lakes. The common danger concerned to those states as well as to Canada has been fully placed before the authorities of the United States, and I understand that a commission last year went fully into this subject, and that it is still engaging the attention of the state legislatures. I am told, however, that it is a very difficult thing, and history confirms the statement, to carry through those legislatures regulations interfering very much with the operations of the fishermen—the fishermen there, as in this country, exercising considerable influence and control over their parliamentary representatives. I was speaking of the want of sympathy which the department receives as a rule in the different localities. The hon. member for Lambton spoke of the sportsmen. They have a strong case in claiming that all regulations should be enforced; but one of the bitterest complaints made by the fishermen is that these regulations too often are made in the interest of sport, and interfere with the legitimate operations of fishermen, which are necessary to maintain life. These difficulties are appreciated and understood, and the first step which it seemed necessary to take was to ascertain whether we could secure joint action or co-operation on the part of the neighbouring states to make more per-