

Inclosure 2 in No. 1.

Report of the Select Committee on Bait and Ice Traffic.

(Presented by the Hon. Mr. Shea, April 8, 1878.)

To his Excellency Sir John H. Glover, K.G., C.M.G., Governor and Commander-in-chief in and over the Island of Newfoundland and its Dependencies.

May it please your Excellency,

THE House of Assembly beg to acquaint your Excellency that they have had under consideration and have unanimously adopted the accompanying Report of a Select Committee of this body, appointed to inquire into the question of the traffic in bait and ice in relation to its effect on the staple industry of the country. The House are deeply impressed with a sense of the necessity of giving effect to the recommendation of the Committee that this traffic should be prohibited, and would have proceeded to the enactment of a measure for this purpose, but that all necessary provisions are deemed to be contained in the Convention of 1818, and the Imperial Act 59 Geo. III, cap. 38, based on the said Convention, and this House respectfully pray that your Excellency will be pleased to request through Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies that directions may be given for causing the provisions of said Convention and Act to be put in operation, and the House have the confident trust that your Excellency will not fail to impress on Her Majesty's Government the urgency of the reasons which have moved the House to the conclusion at which they have arrived on this vitally important matter.

(Signed) J. S. WINTER, *Speaker.*

House of Assembly, April 13, 1878.

A true copy from the Journals of the Assembly.

(Signed) JOHN STUART, *Clerk, House of Assembly.*

Committee Room, House of Assembly, April 8, 1878.

The Select Committee to which was referred the question of the traffic in bait and ice beg to report that they have given full consideration to that important matter. They have examined a large number of witnesses whose evidence is annexed, and have also considered the several Petitions which have been presented to the House praying that restrictions may be imposed on that traffic.

The evidence of the persons examined and the facts set forth in Petitions show a remarkable concurrence of opinion as to the ruinous consequences to flow from a continuance of the wholesale capture of the bait. The Petitions are from every leading place in the country embraced within the limits visited by American fishermen for the purpose of purchasing or taking bait, and the Committee were struck during the examination of the witnesses, who represented all classes interested in the trade and fisheries of the country, with the tone of concern and apprehension with which the wholesale traffic in bait is regarded in its bearing on the future prospect of the Colony. It must also be observed that this feeling is not the result of agitation on the subject, from which it has been entirely free, but is the spontaneous expression of the convictions of the people that great impending evil is before them if the taking of the bait is not made subject to some limitations. In entering on the question, therefore, the Legislature are not originating a movement, but are the exponents of the unanimous sentiment which thus seeks expression and some adequate remedy. There may be a reasonable difference of opinion as to how far the disastrous results of the past two years' fishery on a large part of the coast is referable to this cause, while in some degree the shortcomings seem clearly chargeable to the bait traffic. Bad seasons in the natural order of things are a part of the history of fisheries, and the Committee are anxious not to confound what is normal in our condition with those results that may be legitimately traceable to the special causes which form the subject of the inquiry in which the Committee have been engaged.

The weight of the testimony laid before the Committee justifies the conclusion that the bait on which the successful prosecution of our staple industry is dependent is perilously affected by the constant disturbance to which it is subjected in procuring the large supply required for the demands of foreign fishermen. The bait comes periodically on our coasts to deposit its spawn, and all reason and experience show that if some degree of repose be not accorded to it, other haunts will be sought out where this natural requisite will be