

Your Committee again called WILLIAM KNOX, Esquire, who being examined, said, That in order to give the Committee the fullest Information he was able upon the Subject of their Enquiry, he should begin by stating the Objects of the Act of the 15th of His present Majesty, and the Motives which induced the then Ministers (all of whom are now dead) to adopt the several Provisions it contains, which he was the better enabled to do, as he was then One of the Under Secretaries of State in the American Department, and furnished much of the Information upon which they acted.

That the Island of Newfoundland had been considered, in all former Times, as a great English Ship moored near the Banks during the Fishing Season, for the Convenience of the English Fishermen. The Governor was considered as the Ship's Captain, and all those who were concerned in the Fishery Business, as his Crew, and subject to Naval Discipline while there, and expected to return to England when the Season was over. The English had then no Rivals in the Trade but the French, and although the French Fishery exceeded theirs, the English gradually increased, and those who carried it on were generally successful. The Treaty of Paris, by adding Canada, all Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton to the British American Dominions, deprived France of the Advantage she had from the Employment of the Inhabitants in the Fishery; but at the same Time a new Rival was raised up to the English Traders and Fishermen in those and the other Northern British Colonies, and as the Profit the French Inhabitants had made under the French Government by the Fishery on their Coasts as well as on the Coasts of Newfoundland naturally turned the Attention of the British Subjects to the same Business, many Settlers emigrated to Newfoundland for the Purpose, while others spread themselves along the Shores of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, so that there appeared evident Danger of the Trade and Fishery being lost to England, and that instead of its being a British Fishery, as it had hitherto been, it would become a Colonial Fishery. To prevent the Increase of Inhabitants on the Island, the most positive Instructions were given to the Governors not to make any Grants of the Lands, and to reduce the Number of those who were already settled there. Their Vessels, as well as those belonging to the Colonies, were to be denied any Priority of Right in occupying Stations in the Bays or Harbours for curing their Fish over the Vessels from England; and he was instructed to withhold from them whatever might serve to encourage them to remain on the Island; and as Lord North expressed it, whatever they