

previous to Confederation in 1865, and subsequently on no fewer occasions than in 1868, 1872 and 1873; and on every occasion the mill-owners combined to resist the enactment of that legislation, using the very arguments we hear to-day—saying that it was impossible to comply with such a law without ruin to the lumber industry, that this sawdust was swept down the channels of rivers and did not interfere with navigation, that fish rather than otherwise liked the substance of sawdust, that it was nonsense to talk about sawdust affecting the life of fish. They used all these arguments, published them through the press, and brought them before Parliament; and with their well known influence they succeeded oftentimes in staying the hand of Parliament, in preventing legislation and in inducing enquiries to be made. There were enquiries made previous to 1874 and also during the time of Mr. Mackenzie's Administration. The representations of the mill-owners, which were never despised or put aside carelessly, induced the Government of that day to order another formal enquiry. There was a formal enquiry, the result of which was put in the blue-books. That enquiry has not been alluded to in this discussion, and I doubt if the report of it has been studied by the hon. gentlemen who have attacked the present policy, which was also the policy of that day. The men who made that enquiry, including a Mr. Mather, who was himself, I understand, interested in the lumber trade, gathered facts which, to my mind, place beyond dispute the necessity of having this Act on the Statute-book and enforcing that Act. With regard to the Ottawa River, to which allusion has been made, I do not hesitate to say that I am in accord, so far as my understanding of the question goes, with the necessity of removing the exemption from that river; but still, that river had been exempted before I came into office. The subject has been brought up in the other House of Parliament as well as here. It is now being considered, and a careful enquiry, which is necessary, is to be made, as I understand, with a view of ascertaining whether there are any exceptional reasons why this river should enjoy exemption. But I may say that, coming, as I do, from the Province of Nova Scotia, and the House remembering that the greater part of my argument has reference to the importance of the coastal fisheries, many of the arguments which render it necessary to put into operation a law the enforcement of which brings a great deal of unpopularity and a great deal of suspicion with it, in reference to the rivers flowing into the sea, do not apply to the case of the Ottawa River. We have not, in such a case, the question of coastal fisheries; we have not the question of keeping up the bait supply for the larger and more valuable fish; so that it is burdening this question considerably to come down to a detail of that kind; and I mention that case to point out that in reference to the river about which enquiry is being made as to whether it should be exempted or not. No doubt other rivers might be mentioned where the exemption should never have been applied; and Parliament will remember that last year I introduced a Bill—which for various reasons I was unable to proceed with, not being here—taking away from the Governor in Council the power to exempt rivers. I feel that this is a most difficult responsibility to discharge in many

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ways. It is calculated to create in the public mind a distrust in the Government of the day, that favouritism is shown to this river or that, according to the political complexion of the Government; and it seemed to me that when mill-owners endeavoured to make a case for an extraordinary power, for dumping these deposits into clear and navigable water, they should be bound to come to Parliament like other people and ask that that exemption should be given by special legislation, after they had put all the facts of the case before Parliament. Parliament could then deal with the subject, and the department would be beyond the suspicion which attaches, unfairly I claim, to the administration of this Act at present. In the Senate this whole question came up again, and the representations which hon. gentlemen have advanced with regard to other rivers were advanced there by gentlemen interested in the mill industry on the Ottawa River. They argued that it was impossible to save this sawdust except at great cost, and advanced other arguments. Hon. gentlemen who care to pursue the enquiry into that case further will find the results of the enquiry in the reports of 1888. And after taking all the evidence, that House of Parliament came to the conclusion that the law was a good law, and that its enforcement was necessary on that river, as well as other rivers in the Dominion of Canada. This legislation, as I have said, is not peculiar at all to Canada, either before or since Confederation. It is found in the different States of the Union; it is found in the mother country, where the trouble with sawdust is comparatively insignificant compared with ours. Nevertheless, in the mother country, eminent men have been engaged, at much higher salaries than any of our officials command, investigating this question over a long period of years, and we find the results of their labour, not only in the Statute-book, but all through the Government reports. They have gone into the question scientifically and shown the reasons why this pollution is most hurtful to fish, and particularly to the fish of the kind with which the La Have River is stocked, the king of fish, the salmon. As regards the enforcement of the Act and the statements made that in one district it is in force, and that in another it is not, leading to the suspicion that the department first looks to ascertain who represents a particular district before deciding whether to put the law in force or not, if hon. gentlemen will look to the report of 1888, the first report made after I became Minister of Marine and Fisheries, they will find that the Act, so far as the department can cause it to be enforced, has been generally enforced, or that instructions for its general enforcement have been issued, save in the cases I have mentioned, and with regard to which all the papers will be brought down, which have been exempted, under that power of exempting a river or stream, or part of a river or stream. The reasons, in such cases, which have been given and which have decided the department to issue orders of exemption, are on file and open to inspection. An hon. gentleman mentioned that the Act was a dead letter in the Counties of Guysborough and Pictou. Pictou I know something about, and I can only say this, that the fishing interests are of comparatively minor importance in that county. They are not so great as I should like to see them, and I doubt