

Mr. BOWERS—now he knows all about fishing, the hon. Minister affirms, and I think his word in regard to Hudson's Bay was worth just as much as it is in regard to this fishing.

Mr. FAUVEL. We have heard several hon. members from Nova Scotia speak on this question, and as I represent one of the maritime counties of Quebec I beg also to say a few words upon the subject. I am aware that for the last two years the Quebec Board of Trade has made representation to the Department of Fisheries asking the department to put a stop to the destructive practice of fishing with purse-seines. I may add that as soon as the Department of Fisheries received these facts from the Quebec Board of Trade the department did not believe them, and they asked for further evidence. I may remark that the Quebec Board of Trade has, on several occasions, written to me in my county asking for facts concerning this style of fishing. I know that on the coast of Labrador the population is in a starving condition, from the fact that, having been accustomed to subsist on these fisheries, that these fisheries have so dwindled away by reason of this engine of destruction, the purse-seine, that the people are no longer able to procure a subsistence. I may add that formerly on the Labrador coast my firm had two large fishing establishments, and since these purse-seines came into use my fishermen refuse to go fishing on those coasts, stating that the time for fishing with hook and line had passed, and the purse-seines were reaping the benefit which they had formerly lived upon. I may say also that these engines are of a very deadly nature. They take fish small and large, and of all sorts, and the fishermen take out of the seines only what is required for the market, leaving the small species to poison the waters. I have been living for twenty-five years on the Baie des Chaleurs. Ten years ago we had any amount of mackerel in our bays; but for the last two years I have not seen one mackerel taken in our waters. I am pleased that the Minister of Marine has brought this Bill before the House, and I am sure that he will receive the support of the Quebec Board of Trade, which has at all times been alarmed at the depletion of these fisheries. I may say, with regard to the clause in this Bill concerning the penalty, I agree with the Government that some drastic measures must be resorted to, and I think that when this legislation comes into effect offenders against the law should not only be fined, but their nets and purse-seines should also be confiscated. Why? We have seen smuggling done in the lower St. Lawrence lately; and have not these vessels been taken and confiscated by the Government? What difference is there between smuggling contraband goods and smuggling with regard to the fisheries. I hold that these offences are identical. The fisheries in the Gulf are dwindling away; they must be protected, and the fishermen must also be protected. In doing so the Government will be conferring a benefit on the fishermen and also on the outfitters, because the fisheries will be continued as before. The fishermen will prosecute the mackerel fisheries, as did their ancestors, by hook and line. Let one and all have a chance to catch the fish. Let the poor man have the advantage to take fish at his door, and do not leave it solely to the capitalist, with a large engine of destruction. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Mr. FLINT. I cannot help thinking that the Minister of Marine, who has charge of this Bill, showed a warmth rather disproportionate to the character of the discussion in replying to the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), whose observations were certainly, although strong, and, perhaps, too strong, altogether of an abstract character. When referring to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries he did not refer particularly to the hon. gentleman who is at present occupying that office, but he referred to the office itself, and the power given by this House to the Minister for all time to come. It is to be regretted that the Government is not legislating on this matter under circumstances which would enable all members of the House who are interested in this question to discuss it more intelligently than they are able to do. To a certain degree this legislation is being introduced and carried through under what we might call a sort of panic. Although hon. members have criticised various provisions of this measure pretty severely they have all, apparently, decided to waive their views, whatever their views may be, as to the effect of purse-seines generally; yet the Government have not given this House or the country all the evidence that should be given before such drastic and important legislation should be entered into. Although I am willing to admit that, as regards the evidence presented by the Minister, the weight of evidence is against the use of purse-seines, as regards the effect on our inshore fisheries generally, yet it must not be taken for granted that all intelligent men interested in the subject agree with the evidence adduced by the Minister. There is no doubt that a large quantity of evidence can be adduced from parties interested in the fisheries antagonistic to the use of purse-seines in the fisheries, yet, at the same time, there is a large and intelligent minority who take a diametrically opposite view. It is only fair to make that statement to the House. I have been carried away to a large extent by the statements made on the subject, and no doubt the observations of an hon. gentleman with the experience and weight of the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat are entitled to enormous weight. At the same time, there are other gentlemen with whom I have conversed who state in the most positive terms that in their opinion the damaging effect of purse-seines has been very much exaggerated, and there is reason to believe that the depletion of the inshore fisheries, which we all regret—the mackerel fishery particularly—has not been the result of the use of purse-seines to any very great extent. I agree, to a large extent, with the view taken by the hon. member for Charlotte (Mr. Gillmor), that we are not yet acquainted with the habits of migratory fish, and we are not prepared to say that the decline of the inshore fisheries, particularly mackerel, has been altogether due to the use of purse-seines during the last few years. It would have been much better had the Government, during the last four or five years this subject has been under discussion, and during which they have been receiving the full and able reports of their officers, asked this House to appoint a commission or committee to gather evidence on both sides, and see if we are not proposing to legislate to a large extent in the dark. However, I will not dwell further on this point, as it has been tacitly agreed, I think, that we shall