

what they caught; those employed on board of United States' vessels got theirs in free of duty, whilst the men employed in the vessels of the Dominion had to pay duty on theirs. A hand catching twenty-five barrels of mackerel to his share on board of a United States' Vessel would receive 50 dollars more than he would receive for the same quantity taken in one of our own vessels. A consequence to this was that our best men went on board the American vessels, and our vessels had to put up with the less capable. Indeed should the present state of things continue much longer our people would be compelled to give up the hook and line fishing altogether, for it was impossible that they could continue to compete against the duty and their other disadvantages.

During the Reciprocity Treaty the number of vessels following the hook-and-line mackerel fishery had increased to about sixty in the county of Luvemburg alone. Since the termination of the Treaty the number had been gradually falling off, until during last season no more than six vessels engaged in that business. He had been assured by vessel owners in Mavre au Bouche, an enterprising settlement at the eastern end of the county of Antégonish, and also by those on the western side of the Strait of Canso, in the county of Gusboro', from both of which places the mackerel and herring fisheries had been extensively prosecuted, that the business will not more than pay expenses, and that unless something was done to relieve the duty levied on the fish in the United States, they would be obliged to abandon the business altogether.

This need create no surprise when it is considered that at the present value of mackerel and herrings the duty is fully equal to 50 per cent. Owing to the advantages offered by skippers of American vessels over our provincially owned vessels, engaged in fishing, not only were our best men induced to give their skill to the Americans in fishing, but in many cases they remained away and their industry was lost to the Provinces. They went to the States in the vessel the last trip in order to get settled up for the season's work, and generally remained there to man the fishing and other vessels of the Republic. A very large proportion of the inhabitants of Gloucester and other fishing towns in Massachusetts and Maine were natives of some of the Provinces of the Dominion. Under the Washington Treaty the inducements to give a preference to American vessels would be removed and our own vessels would be able to select good hands, who would remain at home, the temptation to emigrate, as just explained, being removed.

He had heard it said that the consumer paid the duty. Now whilst this might be the case with some articles, it was not so with fish. In our case in this business our fishermen fished side by side with their American rivals, both carrying the proceeds of their catch to the same market where our men had to contend against the free fish of the American fishermen. Thus an American and a provincial vessel took, say, 500 barrels of mackerel each; both vessels were confined to the same market, where they sold at the same price; one had to pay a duty of 1,000 dollars, whilst the other had not to do so. Who then paid the 1,000 dollars? Most certainly not the purchaser or the consumer, but the poor hard-worked fisherman of this Dominion, for this 1,000 dollars was deducted from his account of sales.

Those who contended that in this case the consumer paid the duty ought to be able to show that if the duty were taken off in the United States the selling price there would be reduced by the amount of the duty. There was nothing in the nature or existing circumstances of the trade to cause any person who understands to believe that this would be the case and, therefore, it would be seen that at present our fishermen laboured under disadvantages which made it almost impossible for them to compete with their rivals in the United States, and that the removal of duties under the Washington Treaty would be a great boon and enable them to do a good business where they now were but struggling or doing a losing trade.

He had heard the fear expressed that the Americans would come into our waters and take the fish away from our people. This was a groundless fear. We did not find American fishermen interfering with us. With the United States' markets open to us on the same terms as to its own fishermen, could any intelligent man suppose that they could come down 400 or 500 miles in vessels costing more to build, equip, and sail than our vessels, and compete with our people who took fish almost at their own doors? Our fisheries were very valuable; their value under favourable circumstances could not be over-estimated, but that value would be great or small just in proportion to the markets we possessed. Americans are quite independent of us in the herring and cod fisheries off the coast of Newfoundland, having free access to the fishing grounds there. The Washington Treaty will give them free access to the mackerel fishing of Prince Edward Island.

Under the Convention of 1818 they possess the right to take all kinds of fish when