

granting licenses. Of course, we cannot prevent our fishermen selling their fish to foreign dealers, but no undue advantage should be given to others over our own people, and I think that fishing licenses should be granted with that view. This is a subject on which I have spoken again and again in this House, but perhaps the suggestions coming from the other side to-night will be better received than any coming from this side. I would urge a more strict supervision in the Georgian Bay and Lake Huron on the part of the Fishery Department.

Mr. SPROULE. I would not occupy the time of the House on this subject but for the fact that my constituency reaches to the Georgian Bay, and that I have had a number of communications this session and also in other sessions in reference to a more strict revision of the fishing regulations there. I very gladly endorse the statements made by the hon. member for Lambton (Mr. Lister). I do not think he has overrated the importance of the fishing in the Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, and the same may be said in regard to those portions of Lake Superior with which I am acquainted. The town of Meaford is one of the important fishing stations on the Georgian Bay, and I have information not only from the fishermen but from others who are conversant with this subject, regarding the necessities of the situation which, I think, it would be well to take into consideration. The first point is in regard to the size of the net mesh. I cannot say that we are troubled with the difficulty spoken of by the hon. member for Lambton, that is, the use of pound nets in the Georgian Bay—at least so far as I am aware; but there is some trouble from the small size of the mesh. If my memory is correct I think they are four inches and a-half by regulation, but they are generally found to be only four inches and a quarter. The fishermen have a habit of boiling their nets in a solution of saponica, which causes them to contract until they are barely 4 inches; this will catch very small fish, in fact whitefish and salmon trout are caught with this kind of a net, and the result is, this practice having been carried on for several years, that the Georgian Bay has become largely depleted of fish; and whereas a few years ago the ordinary size of fish brought into Collingwood and Meaford weighed about four to four and a-half pounds, now they average from two pounds to two and a-half. Besides, the fishermen have to go further from the shore almost every year, and the fishing grounds which a few years ago were very remunerative, are now scarcely worth operating on account of the disappearance of these fish. Another practice that is detrimental to the fisheries, is that of collecting fish in the boats and when coming towards the shore the fishermen commence to clean those fish into a box and dump the offal into the lake. This is said to pollute the water and destroy the fish; whether it is so or not I cannot say, but some say it does. Then, when the boat reaches the shore they hand over the last box full of offal to an establishment where soap is made, and represent to the agent at that particular locality that they brought to the shore all the offal that was collected during the time they were out. This practice is said to be very detrimental to the fish. Another point is that during the close season the spawning grounds, which are largely frequented by fish, are near the shore where the water is shallow,

Mr. O'BRIEN.

the fishermen set their nets, and the steamer plying in Georgian Bay for fishing protection is unable to reach them owing to shallowness of the water. They set those nets after dark and leave them until near daylight, when they put their fish into a waggon and take them to Owen Sound where they are kept in a freezer until the close season is over and then sold. Now, it is suggested that the use of freezers be prohibited during the close season. They have been used for years, and one of them had an existence even in the town of Owen Sound where the fishery inspector lives, and these operations are carried on without his knowledge. Therefore, it is suggested that these freezers be shut up, and then there will be no inducement for fishermen to fish during that season of the year, because they would be unable to put their fish on the market, and if they are not frozen they will spoil before the close season is over. In addition to that, it has been suggested that there should be a fishery overseer to look after the fishery inspectors. This overseer should possess magisterial authority to try cases in a summary way on the spot; he might fine offenders and confiscate their nets. It has been suggested that when violators are convicted more than once, their fishing license should be withdrawn. This, it is thought by some, would be a remedy, and I believe it would. Now, these are some of the points in which the law is defective. I fully agree with what has been said by the hon. member for Lambton regarding the fishing laws on the other side over our own, which virtually bring the fisheries of our country under the control of American fishermen. Americans rent boats, or hire them for a comparative trifle, and they have nearly all the fishing boats on the Georgian Bay engaged in their employ to-day; and those who still retain their own boats sell their fish to the Americans at whatever figure the latter are pleased to give, because the former can get no other market for them. The Americans have an advantage over them of a cent a pound on the fish in their own market. There is a firm in the town of Meaford, the Messrs. Mackintosh, who have been carrying on fishing in the Georgian Bay for a great many years, and they are so handicapped in the business that they are absolutely obliged to sell to the American fishermen, because they cannot compete with them. The price of fish is better on the American side, and the Americans who operate in the Georgian Bay, ship from Wiarton to Buffalo, or direct to Buffalo, and get the advantage of the enhanced price. To meet this difficulty, it has been suggested that there should be an export bounty on fish. I do not know whether this would be advisable or not, but if some means could be devised by which our Canadian fishermen could reap the advantages of their own fisheries, it seems very desirable that it should be done. The fishing industry is a very important one, and if we have not better protection for our fisheries, I believe that in a short time they will be almost destroyed, not only in the Georgian Bay but in Lake Superior, where the fishing is carried on. There is another practice which obtains largely during the close season, in the fall of the year, around Midland, that is the practice of catching whitefish and salmon trout, putting them in boxes and labelling them pike or black bass, and shipping them under that name. This, it is thought, could be prevented by closer