

Ontario Fishery Commission.

It was found that the pound-net mesh in use in Lake Erie was very small indeed, being used in the capture of whitefish, herring and blue pickerel, the two last named fishes are very numerous in that lake, as compared with whitefish; the whitefish by over-fishing at improper times had become so greatly reduced as to have induced the fishermen to use a smaller mesh to catch herring and pickerel, the result of which has been that small and immature whitefish have been largely taken, many of which, according to the evidence, had been *wasted, buried on shore, or otherwise destroyed*, as they were undersized and unmarketable fish.

The difficulty now arises as to which of these fish—the whitefish, or herring and blue pickerel, are to be protected by department regulations as regards size of meshes in the pots of pound-nets.

In former years the whitefish were considered the great staple fish in Lake Erie, as they were the most valuable for all purposes both in the local and American markets.

By the use of these small meshed pound-nets killing such great numbers of small immature fish; and the almost general fishing in November the spawning month for whitefish, these fish once so very numerous in Lake Erie had become so diminished in numbers as to turn the general attention of the fishermen almost wholly to capturing the herring and blue pickerel. This has brought about a common saying with fishermen, and fish dealers that “Lake Erie is not now a whitefish lake, it has become a herring and pickerel lake” and he must therefore reduce the size of his mesh in pound-nets to catch these fish. Whilst the former mesh took the full-sized herring and blue pickerel of $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 pound, it also took the young immature whitefish. Thus it will be seen that the combined desires of the fishermen to take whitefish, herring and blue pickerel in the same mesh in the pound-net formerly, has resulted in changing Lake Erie, as the fishermen themselves say, “from a whitefish fishery into a herring and blue pickerel fishery.” And now with the same grasping propensity to take every fish, irrespective of size, these fishermen seek to use a still further reduced mesh in their pound-nets, in order to increase their catch and numbers, by capturing the smaller and immature herring and pickerel. The result of which will be in the end to make Lake Erie *neither a whitefish fishery, nor a herring and blue pickerel fishery*.

Should the authorities, now knowing and sadly experiencing the fate of the whitefish fishery in Lake Erie, allow the avaricious fishermen, with the unpatriotic influences so largely advanced in his favour, to destroy the herring and blue pickerel fisheries in Lake Erie, it will make void for the public generally, a national source of food, by unnecessarily granting privileges to an almost infinitesimally small body of fishermen as compared with the rest of the population, and the result will be for the inhabitants disastrous.

With a close perusal of the appended summary of evidence obtained relating to the meshes in pound-nets in Lake Erie, it will be found, that of the twenty-eight witnesses who gave testimony regarding the meshes of pound-nets. In Lake Erie, eight of them used 3-inch meshes, and sixteen used 2-inch meshes in the pots of the pound-nets:—Of the sixteen using 2-inch meshes, thirteen of them state as follows about the 2-inch mesh:—

1. “Very destructive to small immature fish.” (p. 6 to 8, pt. I.)
2. “Catch some small fish mostly herring, some whitefish.” (p. 26, pt. I.)
3. “Half a pound is the average of fish caught.” (p. 17, pt. I.)
4. “Lifted considerable number of immature fish, *buried half a ton at a time*.” (p. 21, pt. I.)
5. “Have buried not more than *half a ton small fish in a season*.” (p. 21, pt. I.)
6. “Only less than a quarter pound fish can get through.” (p. 29, pt. I.)
7. “Took great number of immature herring and whitefish.” (p. 25, pt. I.)
8. “Catch small whitefish, herring and bass, only *four and five inches long*.” (p. 32, pt. I.)
9. “Catch immature whitefish.” (p. 44, pt. I.)
10. “Has seen small fish thrown away and buried in June and July.” (p. 36, pt. I.)
11. “Has heard repeatedly that large quantities of *small fish are thrown away*.” (p. 38, pt. I.)