

more easily obtainable than the fish, wild rice, elk, moose, deer, rabbits and birds, which constituted the food of the Indians of the latter two districts. At present the extinction of the buffalo has so altered this equality of production, that there now remains, for the Indians of the buffalo country, only the fish, of waters which are rapidly becoming depleted on account of the increased strain upon them for food supplies, the wild animals which have greatly decreased, and the indigenous vegetable products which, while serving as an adjunct to buffalo meat, are by no means so widely distributed, nor so fit for food as to fill its place.

While this is the case in the two districts mentioned, the indigenous food supply of the other two remains nearly the same, and if it were not for the annual exportation of fish to the United States (amounting to 1,509,149 lbs. in the year 1886) the native population could supply themselves in ordinary years with food with very little other aid than the twine and ammunition which is necessary to procure it.

As regards the conserving of existing natural food products, your Committee, having regard to the great importance of the subject, must refer your Honorable House mainly to the evidence presented herewith for suggestions regarding the remaining indigenous animals, birds and vegetables, and confine their remarks to the fishes of the districts in question, and from this evidence it will be seen that the larger fresh water lakes are shallow, Lake Winnipeg averaging ten fathoms deep, and Lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis, half that depth, while the rivers of the prairie region, though vast watercourses in the spring, become, as the summer advances, sluggish and shallow. These causes render the taking of all kinds of fish easier than in deeper waters, and this, together with the export of, and greater local consumption of fish, has seriously depleted the supply in nearly all the larger lakes and streams, necessitating, in the opinion of your Committee, the rigid enforcement of the fishery regulations during the spawning season, in all but such exceptional cases as affect the daily supplies of fishing Indians, and in respect to for all kinds of fish, except the pike, or jack fish, the muskallonge, and other predatory fish of that class.

As regards the larger and still more important question of increasing the existing natural food products of the North-West, your Committee must also refer your Honorable House to the evidence itself; but they are of the opinion that the seeding of all western and north-western waters, which have a depth not greater than four feet and a muddy bottom, with wild rice, the seed of which may easily be procured at one dollar and fifty cents per bushel, will be of the greatest advantage to the White and Indian population of the North-West, as affording a cheap and healthful food product, which has the additional advantage of needing little care to obtain its enormous yield, of occupying no otherwise useful fields, and of attracting, in large numbers, migratory and local water-fowl. This valuable grain, it may be remarked, is rich in gluten, and furnishes, alone, all the elements necessary to vigorous life and health. As regards the increase of fish foods, your Committee recommend the distribution in all the fresh waters of the North-West, the spawn of the sturgeon, white-fish, gold-eye, cat-fish, perch and eels, and in brackish lakes, of the jack-fish, or pike, and muskallonge, and the indigenous and other varieties of carp. As the existing fish breeding establishments do not produce more than one or two of these varieties, a local hatchery is urgently needed, for the breeding of the other varieties mentioned, at some point which is central for distribution, and on or near some large lake or stream.

Your Committee are also of opinion that until the action thus recommended has produced the full measure of effect, the prohibition of the export of all fish, except salmon and other trout, pike and muskallonge, will be in the interest of Indian and White alike, and that even when the maximum of reproduction is attained, the weight of the evidence herewith submitted indicates a greater measure of advantage to be obtained by the drying, salting, smoking, freezing or pemmicanizing of this food product for the use of the Indians and Whites near fishing waters, and for the rationing of western Indians, till the vigorous efforts which are being made to make them self-dependent, by instruction in the arts and agriculture of civilized men shall have borne full fruit. In this connection your Committee also desire to state their