

lean, (Lunenburg), D. D. McKenzie, W. S. Middlebro, Frederick D. Monk, Bruno Nantel, F. F. Pardee, J. H. Sinclair, Ralph Smith, (Nanaimo), Hon. R. F. Sutherland, Jas. D. Taylor, (New Westminster), W. F. Todd, O. Turgeon, Hon. A. R. Warburton.

After preliminary arrangements were made by the committee, its first session to take evidence, under the Chairman, Mr. J. H. Sinclair, was held in this House of Commons, committee room No. 32, on Monday, March 8, 1909, the subject being the 'lobster industry,' and with the exception of two sessions, at which some evidence with regard to the oyster fishery and the fisheries of Georgian bay and adjacent waters were taken, every session up to the end of the fiscal year was devoted to full and comprehensive inquiries into the lobster industry, which indeed had not been nearly completed and bid fair to run well on to the end of the session of parliament.

THE CANADIAN LOBSTER FISHERY.

It may not be inappropriate to refer briefly to the history of the lobster fishery of Canada.

About the year 1873, the fishery had assumed sufficient importance to attract more than ordinary attention. It was at that time prosecuted chiefly on the coasts of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where there were in the former province about 40 and in the latter about 24 canneries in operation. These are said to have used about 12,000 tons of raw material, and to have exported to the United States about 2,000 tons of canned lobsters, smaller quantities having been consigned to other markets. The value of the lobster catch cured in 1873 was \$1,214,749.50, while about \$120,000 worth were disposed of in a fresh state.

In view of the fact that excessive fishing had exhausted the lobster fishery along the north eastern coast of the United States, and that the enterprise therein embarked in had been transferred to Canada, the department was impressed with the necessity of some measures designed to protect and perpetuate the natural supply by some economic regulations.

Thus the experience of the United States was sufficient to suggest some deterrent measures to avoid in Canada a repetition of conditions there. It was appreciated at the time that it was easier to exhaust a local asset such as the lobster fishery than it would be to revive it after the event. Hence the necessity for some timely precautions.

LOBSTER FISHERY REGULATIONS.

This consideration of the matter was productive of the first fishery regulation touching the lobster industry that was ever adopted by the Governor General in Council by virtue of the authority of the Fisheries Act, and because it was the initial legislation in this regard, its substance is here extended. The order in council was dated July 7, 1873, and the essential part was as follows:—

'In the provinces of Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick no person shall at any time fish for, catch, kill, buy, sell or have in possession any soft shell lobsters or female lobsters with eggs attached; nor shall lobsters of a less weight than one and a half pounds be at any time fished for, caught, killed, bought, sold or had in possession; but when caught by accident in nets or other fishing apparatus lawfully used for other fish, young lobsters of less weight than one pound and a half shall be liberated alive at the risk and cost of the owner of the net or apparatus, or by the occupier of the fishery, on whom, in every case shall devolve the proof of such actual liberation.'

This was the signal for strong remonstrances from various quarters, the chief objections emanating from proprietors of canning establishments, because of the effect of the regulation in curtailing the supply of raw material which could, under the restrictions imposed, reach their canneries; nor was there any lack of objection on the part of the fishermen.