

MANITOBA FISHERIES

With the annual marketed value of its products between five and seven million dollars, the commercial fishing industry of Manitoba does not rank high in the economy of the province, according to Information Services, Department of Fisheries. However, it gives employment to some 6,500 fishermen and probably as many more in subsidiary industries such as transportation, fish processing, fish marketing and fish box manufacture. Some 17 freighting vessels transport the catch to market and about 2,500 fishing boats and skiffs are used in the fishery. These craft represent an investment of some \$750,000. Some 100,000 gillnets are used, valued at about \$2.0 million. All told the investment in equipment is about \$3.0 million.

Of the 100 million pounds of fish landed annually in the commercial freshwater fisheries of Canada, about two thirds of the total comes from Manitoba and Ontario. At one time about half Canada's freshwater catch came from Ontario with one-quarter from Manitoba. In recent years Manitoba has forged ahead and on a few occasions caught more than Ontario. In 1951, Manitoba's total catch was about 35.5 million pounds, while Ontario landed about 31 million pounds. In 1952, however, Manitoba's catch declined to 31 million pounds while Ontario fishermen landed about 38 million pounds. In 1954 there was a further decline in Manitoba to 28 million pounds and Ontario fishermen landed 48 million pounds.

SPECIES

In the past 10 years the commercial fisheries of Manitoba have yielded an annual catch of about 30 million pounds. Lake Winnipeg, the seventh largest freshwater lake in North America, has provided almost half of Manitoba's annual catch. From Lake Winnipeg comes the famous Selkirk whitefish which are in great demand in the United States where they are smoked for the delicatessen trade. The Winnipeg goldeye, which made its first appearance from Lake Winnipeg catches, is Manitoba's most famous fish but landings have declined over the years and its contribution to the total is small. The greater part of the goldeye catch now comes from Lake Winnipegosis and the Saskatchewan River.

In poundage, the greater part of the catch is pickerel, followed by whitefish, saugers, pike and tullibee. Other species, in addition to goldeye, are bass (sheepshead), bullheads, carp, catfish, perch, suckers and lake trout.

The areas producing the catch include sixty or more lakes, some of which are quite small. The principal production is from Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipegosis, South Indian Lake, Gods Lake, several small lakes in the district of The Pas, and the Manitoba portion of Reindeer Lake.

Processing of fish for market has expanded and the demand for Manitoba fillets increased. New plants have been constructed and existing ones remodelled and improved.

Winnipeg is the centre of the freshwater fishing industry in Western Canada and distributes, in addition to the Manitoba production, large quantities of fish produced in the neighbouring provinces.

METHODS OF FISHING

The summer fishing operation produces somewhat less than half the total catch. The gear in general use is the gillnet and the fishermen operate motor-driven boats, usually about 32 feet long, and skiffs usually about 20 feet long. The boats go out daily and return before nightfall. In the winter the gillnets are set through holes cut in the ice and the fishermen establish camps on the ice right at the fishing grounds and usually stay out a week at a time under semi-Eskimo conditions. Part of the catch is frozen and packed at the camp site and part is hauled in heated cabooses to the packing station to be packed as fresh fish. Tractors and snowmobiles haul it to railheads.

FISHERY REGULATIONS

Under federal legislation the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources administers the fishing regulations. The regulations provide for conservation measures in the fishing areas and the number and sizes of boats permitted. All fish dealers are required to be licensed under the Fish Dealers Act of Manitoba. Special attention is being paid to quality products by officers of the Department of Fisheries of Canada. The federal Department introduced a system of inspection of all export shipments of whitefish from Canada, which came into full operation on May 16, 1951. Federal officers are stationed at points in the province as well as in other provinces and examine shipments of whitefish destined for United States markets. The whitefish Export Inspection Regulations have been welcomed by the industry and now Departmental officers are being asked to inspect shipments of other fish such as pike, pickerel, lake trout and tullibee. The Manitoba department, like Saskatchewan and Alberta, makes whitefish surveys on commercially fished lakes to determine the quality of the fish for market purposes. The data is gathered by provincial conservation officers in the field and an analysis service is provided by the federal Department of Fisheries in Winnipeg.

The concern over the quality of whitefish originating in Manitoba and other inland provinces led to the establishment of a scientific research station in Winnipeg in 1944. This station is operated by the Fisheries Research

(Over)