

mercial establishments which box, cool and ship the fish to the market. The buildings must be erected; the ice must be put up in the winter time, and every preparation made in advance of the actual fishing season. During the season the company depends on the fishing operations for the realization on the capital invested.

The spring fishing season opened on 5th May this year. On the day before, after all preparations had been made, all licenses issued, buildings erected, boats and nets provided, and everything else made ready, the Department of Fisheries at Ottawa wired restricting the total catch from the lake to 240,000 pounds for the season. Already the department had issued licenses for commercial fishing in the lake to the number of 125, which was 55 more than last year. By the issue of these licenses they have attracted to the lake poor men—these fishermen are generally poor—and have been the means of causing them to spend their time and invest in boats and other fishing gear, and, by issuing one-third more licenses this year than last, have led everyone to suppose that there would be no limit on the fishing; and then a wire is sent out the day before the season opens telling the licensees that they are limited to a quantity which, if divided equally among them, would not give any of them a summer's earnings.

Now, we are quite agreeable that the department should decide that not more than so many pounds of fish shall be taken out of the lake during the season, if they make the decision upon information and knowledge. But when they make that decision, they should not issue an unlimited number of fishing licenses, thereby inducing the investment of time and money in an enterprise that, by reason of the restriction of the department itself, cannot possibly result in advantage to the parties concerned. It may be that the Government think it does not make any difference, that it does not concern them; that they are protecting the fish and it does not matter about the people. In my judgment, it matters a great deal more about the people than about the fish. The Government has no right to deal with the people, even if they are poor people, in that way. They should exercise reasonable judgment in issuing licenses for fishing in any lake in which they intend to restrict the catch. Last year, there was no restriction on the catch, and all the fishing companies were allowed to catch as much as they could. People had no reason to believe that there would be any restriction this year, until after every investment had

been made, and every preparation completed. If I speak strongly on this matter, it is because what took place in this case this year took place in the case of Lesser Slave lake last year. In the previous season, there was unrestricted fishing in that lake, and when the next season came, after licenses had been issued, a restriction was announced. It was an unjustifiable hardship, both upon the people who are investing their money as fish exporters and upon the unfortunate fishermen who gather there. I have not heard from Lesser Slave lake this year, and I do not know the conditions there, but I do know that last year there was an unjustifiable hardship. Representations were made to the department on the subject last year, and I am astonished to know that exactly the same course has been followed in the case of Lac la Biche this year. I cannot imagine that the minister could have had knowledge of the facts in time or it would not have occurred. I may say that the equipment of the individual fishermen costs \$60 or \$70, exclusive of boats, licenses, and incidentals, and the total catch allowed, if divided equally among the licensees, will not afford a return for the investment made and the time employed.

Mr. HAZEN: This matter was brought to my attention on several occasions last year. Lac la Biche, which is not a very large lake, was, until the last few years, so far removed from settlement that there was very little desire to fish in it. But, in consequence of the opening up of communication by the building of railways in that district and by other means, the fishing attracts many people who previously could not take advantage of it. Last year, 33 people applied for and obtained licenses to fish in the lake. As a result, we received petitions from the locality pointing out that as the lake was not a large one, if fishing were allowed without restriction as to the quantity taken, the result would be that in a short time no fish would be left in the lake, and the people in the vicinity would not have the advantage of living in the neighbourhood of water in which fish could be caught. We communicated with our inspector on the subject. The inspector visited the lake and reported that in his opinion it was not safe to allow more than 234,000 pounds of fish to be taken out each year during the summer fishing. The same representations were made to us this year by settlers in the neighbourhood who are interested in the fishing. At the same time