

thing. Then the Government were supposed to have the property of these fisheries, and they had a perfect right, under those circumstances, to raise a revenue from it, as the property of the country; but the rule held to-day is, that the proprietary right exists in the owner of the soil on the fresh-water streams; and on those streams my hon. friend will see—and I am sure he will admit the justice and force of the remark—that in such a case any fee imposed by way of license money would be simply a nominal sum for the purpose of regulation, and not for the purpose of revenue. I think that my hon. friend will agree with me in that. I am sure every one in the House will approve of it, and I am glad to hear assent coming from every seat on the Treasury benches. When the imposition of the fees for salmon nets was proposed by myself in this House years ago, and when it was objected to by some hon. members, I took the ground then, as I take the ground now, that these fisheries along the coasts and the bays of the Maritime Provinces have existed from grandfather to father and grandson—they have been occupied for years by a recognised law which, whether it is part of the common or Statute law or not, is a Statute law from one end of the Atlantic coast of the Dominion to the other, and which has always been acted upon on those coasts. Under these circumstances I put this to the Government: Whether or not in granting these licenses, they would feel it desirable, in the interests of peace and harmony—the more so because it does not affect the public interests of any kind—to recognise the principle that licenses should be granted wherever occupation has existed for years, and exists to-day, to the occupants of the land upon the shores in front of which they fish. I am sure that this is a point which will be conceded by the acting Minister of Fisheries, and that he will recognise the fact that the fee which was imposed years ago, and is in force to-day, is merely a nominal one—one which with regard to net-fishing was to be so much up to fifty fathoms, and a reduced sum beyond that. This is a system which has not worked at all badly. It does not bring in a revenue, because it was imposed not for revenue but for regulation; on that principle, I trust the hon. gentleman will continue to carry out in his Department—because it had not given dissatisfaction in the country, and while giving to the Department power to regulate and control—the power of being able statistically to keep the run of the fisheries, it does not bear hardly on the toilers of the sea, whose interests have been so ably advocated on many occasions by the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Fortin.) These are the two points which, speaking from the standpoint of a fishing county, I have thought it my duty to state to the House, and to press upon the Government; and I am glad to see, from the tokens of assent with which my remarks have been met while I have been speaking, that in both these points hon. gentlemen coincide with the views I have expressed, and the practices which have been in vogue ever since I can recollect, and which I know, if continued, will give satisfaction to the people. It is only within the last five or six years that the people of the country have recognised the fact that it was desirable, in order to get Governmental and legal recognition, that they should consent to turn to the Government so far as to get licenses at all, but they have done so pretty generally now. The matter is pretty well settled in the Maritime Provinces, at least; and if the policy of years ago is continued by the hon. gentlemen, I think the passage of this Bill will combine with it in giving the security which the Government have endeavored to give to the fishermen, and, at the same time, maintain that control which it is so desirable that the Government should maintain, whenever the duty is imposed upon them, of protecting the fisheries. So much for the Bill itself. I think, on the whole, that my hon. friend from the county of St. John (Mr. Weldon), having stated his

Mr. MITCHELL.

views to the House, will not feel called upon to press on the Government the necessity of making a change in the particular feature to which he has alluded. I think an expression of opinion from the hon. gentleman who is in charge of the Bill, in response to the remarks of the hon. member for the county of St. John (Mr. Weldon), that no favoritism shall be shown in the matter of licenses, that people applying for licenses shall be dealt with equally, that no refusal or assent shall be given on any other ground than the public interest, such as the possibility of a stream being over-fished—will be accepted by him as sufficient. There is one point more which I think requires some little attention at this particular moment. What is to become of these fisheries as they stand to-day? The Local Governments claim the right to control the fishermen on their own vacant lands on the different streams within their jurisdiction. The individuals owning the lands upon these streams claim the exclusive right of fishing off their lands, while not one of them spend \$1, or do a single act to protect or propagate the fish at their breeding points, which are at the head of these streams. Occasionally you will find a gentleman of property who has the spirit of a sportsman, and who may take some pains to protect the fish by putting guardians in the rivers or by other means, but these are isolated cases. Had it not been for the large sums which the resources of Canada have enabled Parliament to place at the disposal of the Government for the protection of this great salmon industry, there is no doubt that this important source of wealth would by this time have been almost annihilated. While I do not desire to give arbitrary powers to the hon. Minister to deal with matters such as these, yet I feel it to be necessary when the matter has been fairly considered, where objections have been presented on one side and fairly dealt with on the other, to give that support to the passage of all measures such as this, which will strengthen the hands of the Government in protecting this industry. I believe we are on the right track in doing this, and I think it is important that we should legislate in that spirit. Within the last ten years we have seen the salmon industry of the country advance to an enormous extent. Ten years ago you could get at our fishing banks or stations—and there are dozens of them in my own county—salmon for 40 cts. or 50 cts. apiece. That was all they were worth for salting down or smoking, to be sent to the United States market. What can you get them for to-day on the river which runs through my own county, the greatest salmon river of this continent, and exhibiting the greatest amount of production? You cannot buy them for less than twice as much, and very likely you would have to pay three times the price I have mentioned. I think it is the duty of the Government to give facilities for transporting those fish in a fresh condition from the points of production by connections with the Intercolonial to the centres of commerce in the United States and Canada. The Intercolonial has provided refrigerator cars to carry the fish in a fresh condition. If they have connections by steamboats or other means of communication by which the fresh fish packed in ice and snow could be carried, in place of their being worth what they are worth to-day, they would be worth in New York from \$3.50 to \$5, according to the supply, and that for fish which were only worth 40 cts. apiece a few years ago. I take this opportunity of pressing on the Government the necessity of giving to our coast fishermen these facilities, by means of which they will not only utilize to the best advantage this great source of wealth, but will realize interest upon the investments they have made in the railways of the country by increasing their traffic, thus producing a result which will be alike beneficial to the country and to the interests of the fishermen. I trust that my hon. friend from St. John will withdraw his objection to that part of the Bill, and accept from the Government the assurance that, in dealing with this question, they will show no favorit-