

form. This revision was an easy matter as regards Ontario and Quebec, but in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick it was attended with much difficulty, and is still in many respects incomplete. The Nova Scotian Fishery laws and regulations had been left in force by the *Fisheries Act*. It was necessary therefore to repeal them by an Act of the Dominion Parliament, making provision also for certain uniform close seasons, which were formerly established by the Provincial statutes. The various County regulations handed down from municipal bodies needed to be replaced by other restrictions. In New Brunswick the existing fishery regulations likewise wanted further amendment. Occasion was also taken to suggest the imposition of a specific tax per barrel on the salmon and bass fishings and to repeal the tax formerly levied on nets used. The rate at first fixed was \$1 per 200 lbs weight of salmon, and 50 cents on the same quantity of bass. These rates were afterwards reduced to less than one half in consequence of the general depression of this branch of business and on application by persons engaged in it.

In recommending a change in the application of this tax, the undersigned had it in view to extend by degrees, and in an accustomed shape, the system of occupying fishery stations under season licenses which already obtains in Ontario and Quebec, and which it has been the avowed policy as well as the official practice gradually to adapt, with suitable modifications, to similar holdings in other Provinces of the Dominion. It is very much to be regretted that the salmon and bass fisherman have taken an entirely unnecessary alarm at this change, on the extraordinary ground of its being an interference with vested rights; and notwithstanding the merely nominal charge to which the reduced rate amounts, that they have resisted payment, and placed themselves in antagonism to the regulations. This unfortunate attitude seems the more surprising when it is considered that the fisheries protection service has so greatly benefited themselves; and that by securing them by legal title in the exclusive use of the stations they respectively occupy, the Department proposes to make such benefits lasting and progressive. Whether or not these occupiers of fishery stations are sole owners of the privileges they enjoy, and are entitled to exemption from regulations to which the occupants of fishing berths in other parts of the Dominion have always conformed, involves questions of law with which it is not my province to deal. The contest thus raised is, I am firmly convinced, a grave mistake as affects their own interests, and is caused by apprehensions which are entirely groundless. There are so many and such excellent reasons why this Department and the fishermen should be in general accord respecting all measures calculated to improve the fisheries on which they themselves depend, and which form so important a source of commerce and food supply to the whole country as to induce Parliament to appropriate annually large sums of the public money, and the Government to devise and maintain a protective system ensuring their perpetual increase; that regret on account of any difficulty of this sort could not be lessened by their own failure to establish themselves in what is believed to be an illegal pretension.