

Treaty, the preliminary decision arrived at before the Commission at Halifax excluded this traffic from the contemplation of the Commissioners, as not being within the terms of the Treaty; and the right of the British North American Legislatures to regulate that traffic was formally and necessarily admitted. Your Committee are satisfied by evidence that the evils under consideration mainly grow out of this traffic, and that the principal actors are not the Americans, but our own people, who recklessly disregard the public permanent welfare, as well as their own, in the suicidal desire for immediate gain, which it is shown in evidence is more than counterbalanced by the consequent neglect of their usual avocations. Even those who immediately profit by it are not unwilling to see the traffic restricted, for some of them who were amongst the witnesses examined by the Committee urged the enactment of a regulating law as necessary to preserve the bait from utter destruction.

Your Committee are not insensible of the difficulties that lie in the way of such legislation, and they feel that it can only be justified by the presence of a very exceptional exigency. The spirit of British commercial policy regards such laws with extreme disfavour, if not aversion, and our local practice is in usual accord with the accepted principles of Imperial legislation. With such views governing our public life in this country we feel great reluctance in advising a reactionary course, and nothing but a sense of special and paramount necessity would impel us to move in that direction. But we cannot consent to look on the waste of those means on which our people depend for their bread without an effort to arrest it, and if the only available remedy fails, to coincide with the recognized principles of fiscal laws, we must have primary regard to the necessity that regards only that law which seems specially adapted to meet the emergency.

Your Committee are not ignorant of the views that have been expressed by Her Majesty's Government in reference to the Bait question, nor of the repugnance with which they regard generally the imposition of restrictions on the traffic. But in what we propose in the present instance, we are exercising that common law right to protect our property from spoliation, and to regulate our trade, which is the necessary interest privilege on which the value of property is made to depend. The fisheries of this country are primarily the property of its people, and on our Legislature does it devolve to provide the measures for the conservation of their integrity. Our local knowledge must make us the more competent judges of those interests with which our prosperity is interwoven, and when, as in the present case, we are dealing with a state of things on which the sober judgment of the whole people has pronounced its decision, we cannot believe that our Imperial rulers will use their authority to defeat our efforts for self-preservation. It is a question that involves our rights to live in the land where our lot has been cast, for it ceases to be matter of speculation that the continuance of the waste of the bait must pauperize our population, and sever our present trade relations, for the compact that has hitherto existed between capital and labour in this country will be necessarily broken when the basis of remunerative industry is destroyed. The policy of the Imperial Government in regard to its dependencies is specially just and protective, and we hold the confident belief that no rigid regard for theories of political economy will influence that Government to nullify the carefully-considered efforts of this Legislature to save this old and loyal Colony from pauperism and decay.

The Committee respectfully recommend that while American fishermen are protected in the exercise of their Treaty rights to take fish on the coasts of this island, the sale of bait at any distance within three miles of the coast should be prohibited from the 25th April to the 1st October in each year, this prohibition not to affect any usage by which our fishermen now obtain their bait. The term bait to be understood to mean caplin, herring, and squid.

The Committee feel assured that the Legislature will readily supply the necessary means for carrying a prohibitory law into effect.

(Signed)

A. SHEA.
JOHN RORKE.
ROBERT J. KENT.
C. R. AYRE.
LEWIS TISSIER.
JAMES H. WATSON.
ROBERT ALEXANDER.
M. E. DWYER.
P. NOWLAN.

A true copy from the Journals of the Assembly.

(Signed)

JOHN STUART, Clerk, House of Assembly.