

up 150 tons of fish with a very small plant. This was the commencement of the export of whitefish from Manitoba. As soon as our fish reached the Chicago market, the great American interests were not long in realizing that there was magnificent whitefish in the western provinces. In 1886 we find established in that lake what was called the Manitoba Fish Company. But in reality it was an American concern, 96 per cent of the stock being owned or controlled by gentlemen living in Detroit. This company started operations in a big way. They had one or two steamers and a couple of tugs. They had their large freezers, one at Swamp island, one at Little Saskatchewan, and another at Selkirk. For two years this company, with the pioneer fish company, Reid and Clark, took from 1,200 to 1,500 tons of fish in that lake, nearly all of which were exported to Chicago and other American cities. These fish were cleaned and frozen as soon as taken out of the water and held in freezers until the winter and shipped out of the province during the winter season. The fish at that time averaged from 4½ to 6 pounds each. The men who caught the fish, our settlers, Icelanders principally, received from the American interests 1½ cents a fish. When I tell you that these same fish retailed on the markets of Chicago and other American cities for ten cents and twelve cents per pound, you will realize the immense profit that accrued to this American interest. As early as 1890, the possibility of the depletion of this great lake became apparent. Representations were made to the Department of Fisheries here by prominent men in Manitoba and by the settlers engaged in the business on Lake Winnipeg. Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, then Minister of Marine and Fisheries, was induced to send a commissioner to that province to make investigation. He instructed Mr. Wilmut, who was then commissioner, to proceed to Manitoba and make a thorough investigation of this question. I have in my hand the report made by Mr. Wilmut, and, for the information of the House and for the information of the minister, who, I know, is a very busy man, and not likely to have time to read these great reports, I intend to read a few passages:

Ottawa, October, 1890.

The Hon. Charles H. Tupper,  
Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

Sir,—Having received instructions from you to go to Manitoba to examine into the condition of Lake Winnipeg fisheries, covering the grounds mentioned in certain correspondence regarding the alleged depletion of whitefish, and to investigate other matters connected therewith; and having carefully read the numerous files of correspondence, relating to the above subject, which have passed between the Departments of the Interior and of the Fish-

eries; and also having personally visited some of the most important fishing stations on Lake Winnipeg, mentioned in the aforesaid correspondence, I beg to report, for the information of your department, the following views which I entertain and the conclusions I have formed on the subject matter under consideration.

Lake Winnipeg lies partly in the two provinces of Manitoba and Keewatin. It is the largest and most important body of water in these provinces, with an area of some 9,550 square miles. Its extreme length takes in about 270 miles, and its greatest width is about 70 miles. It runs in a line nearly north and south. The southern half of the lake is very narrow, and largely cut up with small bays and inlets, and filled with numerous islands. The northern or upper half opens out to a width of some 60 miles, and covers nearly three-fourths of the whole area of the lake.

The principal product from Lake Winnipeg is the famous highly-priced whitefish, *Coregonus albus* which, for domestic and commercial purposes, no doubt stands foremost on the list of fresh water fishes in America. These fish have been, and no doubt are yet, quite numerous in Lake Winnipeg, although it is held by many persons, and truly so, that in certain localities a depletion is already felt from the wholesale methods of fishing practised by certain fishing companies, who carry on this industry quite extensively almost wholly for the United States markets.

Much controversy has arisen regarding this alleged excessive fishing in Lake Winnipeg between these fishing companies and leading inhabitants of Manitoba, and also with the settlers and Indian tribes around the lake, which has culminated to such a degree at last as to call for the serious consideration of the Departments of the Fisheries, and of the Interior to investigate this matter from a disinterested and public standpoint, not only with regard to the above issues, but also in the interests of the general public.

It is therefore of vital importance to all concerned that some practical solution should be reached by which, if possible, the fishing industries of Lake Winnipeg should not be speedily impoverished, but should be maintained as a source of wealth, and luxury for the inhabitants generally of Manitoba, both for the present and future.

There are several separate interests connected with the fisheries of Lake Winnipeg which are dealt upon somewhat lengthily in the departmental correspondence referred to—each claiming that the views held by them are the correct ones, in so far as the question of depletion of the whitefish in the lake is concerned. These different interests may be classed as follows:—

1. The Indian tribes under the control of the Department of the Interior claim that, many parts of the lake which formerly supplied them with the requisite abundance of fish-food are now showing depletion by reason of the excessive and wholesale fishing carried on by certain large fishing corporations.

2. Prominent officials and leading citizens of Manitoba also represent that Lake Winnipeg is undergoing a falling off in many localities of its former whitefish crop, and that, therefore, means should be instituted to stay this