

attention of the Minister of Marine to this important fact I take the liberty of addressing the House to-day. In Georgian Bay the fishing is altogether by gill-nets; in Lake Huron, on the other hand, the fishing is by pound-nets. In order to show the destruction caused by gill-net fishing I refer hon. gentlemen to pages 85 and 92 of the Minister's report for this year. Mr. Wilmot, in his report to the department, says, on page 85:

"At the present time a great deal of dissatisfaction exists among wholesale dealers and their customers, owing to the fish not being in a sound condition for food, especially when arriving at destinations long distances from the fishing grounds. The cause of this, in my opinion, is largely due to the use of the gill-net. The present system of operating the gill-net by the ordinary run of fishermen is to have two to four gangs set in different localities; these are lifted alternately, usually remaining in the water from three to four days, but in case of rough weather the fishermen cannot reach them, and the fish are not removed for a much longer period. The result is that a large proportion of the fish, when taken from the net, are in a somewhat decomposed state, and it stands to reason that their condition will not be improved by the time they arrive at the important fish markets, such as Toronto and Buffalo, to be sold to the retail dealers of Canada and the United States, after having been kept for a week or more. It is well known that a large percentage of the fish taken by the gill-nets are unfit to be shipped fresh. If in good order when caught it would profit the fishermen to ship them in that state, as they command a much higher price than when salted. The reason that such a large number of fish are salted is, simply because they are not marketable to ship as sound, fresh fish. The effect of the salt put upon them for curing purposes temporarily hardens the fish, deceives the buyer, and leads the consumer to the mistaken idea that they are wholesome, when in a great many instances they are really unfit for human food. * * * I am of the opinion that the gill-net is much more destructive than the pound-net, and its use as at present practised must eventually exterminate the salmon trout and whitefish. In districts where extensive fishing is carried on by means of gill-nets many miles of fishing grounds are covered, and while the meshes of these nets are made sufficiently large (say, 4 or 5 inches) to capture the most marketable fish, they allow the poorer classes (such as the sucker, the mullet and the ling, averaging 2 pounds in weight, and for which there is no demand) to escape."

On page 92 he says:

"From the foregoing explanations, it will be observed that, with gill-net appliances and their facilities for easy removal from feeding to spawning grounds, it is a very difficult matter for the fish to escape being caught. A deplorable fact in connection with this system, and one very much to be regretted, is that a large proportion of the fish caught by means of the gill-net are taken off the spawning grounds at a period when they are not in marketable condition."

It is alleged by all writers on fishing subjects that the pound-net is a very destructive net, and referring to this and to the particular locality that I have in view, namely, a portion of Lake Superior, I beg to say to the Minister that if pound-nets can be at all justified, he has licensed too many of them on the particular section to which I refer, and if pound-nets are to be licensed at all there should be as few licenses granted as possible and the nets should be kept a long distance apart. It is contended by those who are engaged in the industry that these pound-nets give the fish no chance to escape, that they are put in the run-ways of the fish, are kept going day and night, and that the effect of this system of fishing has been to almost destroy the seine fishing in Lake Huron and the other lakes to which I have alluded. I would point out to the House that the seine fishing is a system of fishing which employs a large number of men. It means a very considerable expenditure of money, it means a large number of votes, and take it from every standpoint so far Mr. LISTER.

as the public are concerned, it is the best system of fishing. On the other hand the pound-net fishing and gill-net fishing employ very few men, because after the first expenditure for the outfit the expense of carrying on the fishery is comparatively light. As I have already said, it is contended by the seine-net fishermen that the effect of the pound-net and gill-net has been almost to destroy the seine-net fisheries on the shores of Lake Huron and the rivers running into the lakes. It has been noticed for the past four or five years—for six or seven years probably—that as the pound-nets have increased in number the catch of the seine fishermen has been reduced from year to year, until it is safe to say that within the last two or three years the catch of the seine fishermen has been comparatively very little. For the purpose of bearing out the statement which I make in this regard I will take the liberty of reading a letter which I received from a seine fishermen living in the County of Huron, on the other side of the line dividing the County of Huron from the County of Lambton. He says:

"DEAR SIR.—As we, the seine fishermen of the Grand Bend, have seen by the newspapers that you have been inquiring in Parliament for information with regard to the pound-nets in the lakes with a view to have them removed; it is the earnest wish of the seine fishermen that you would push it forward as there is about sixteen pound-nets at or near here which have ruined the seine fishing. There are three or four seine fishermen who dropped fishing, and more to follow, on account of the pound-nets. Sir, as you may not be aware how the thing is done allow me to inform you. A party in Port Huron came here last year and engaged some Canadian men to work the nets as their own, but the firm sends their steam-tug around twice a week and take away nearly all our best fish to Port Huron, and the Canadians take the small fish ashore and if they cannot sell them they bury them—as they have no salt to cure them—and so they are lost. They are set so close to the shore that it prevents the fish from running their natural course, and if it is allowed to go on for a few years longer it will ruin all our fish. It is only one mile from the shore where the fish are set and they are generally placed opposite the County of Huron between the Grand Bend and a place called Bayfield, about fifteen miles from here. The last agent when the fishing did not pay, took his pound-nets over to the States and brought them back in the spring and set them. The take generally consists of whitefish, salmon trout, sturgeon and pickerel. It is the Americans who are making the money and not the Canadians, and the Americans are depriving us of our fish. As the inhabitants are all eye-witnesses to the occurrences above mentioned, it can be proven, and we hope you will do what you can in the matter. At present there are six seines at work, four men to each. Any further information you may need I shall be only too happy to give you."

I think, Sir, I am safe in making the statement that in the files of the Fisheries Department will be found petitions sent to the Minister of the Department year after year pointing out the injurious effect of the pound-net fishing, and asking that either the pound-net should be abolished or the number of licenses reduced. The letter I have just read is only one out of a large number I have received from different sections of the country where the seine fishermen are complaining all alike that the effect of the pound-nets and gill-nets is to destroy the fishing ground along the shores of these lakes. I hope that when the Minister takes this matter into his consideration he will see his way to largely reduce the number of pound-net licenses, if not to abolish that system of fishing altogether. I can fully understand that when applications for pound-net licenses are put in, influences are brought to bear on the Minister which in some cases are hard to resist, but if the belief is that these nets