

secured. The practice of the local fishermen is to obtain their bait early or late in the day, and this leaves the greater portion of the twenty-four hours a period of necessary quiet. Since Americans have in large numbers begun to visit our coast, the process of bait capture has been more or less continuous during the day-time, and the effect of this, as is very generally experienced, would seem to be the driving of the bait fisheries into deep water, where it cannot be taken, leaving the local fishermen often idle at that critical period of the season when a few days may determine the question of a bad or successful issue of the year's operations. This applies especially to the caplin bait. As regards the herring, which is the bait of the earlier season, the demand for the purposes of foreign fishermen having regard to the limited supply frequently absorbs the whole quantity, and we have sometimes found our own cod-fishery entirely suspended by reason of the traffic with foreigners. A notable instance of this fact occurred last spring in the Harbour of Placentia, when, after the foreign demands had been satisfied, the place remained depleted of the herring bait for the remainder of the season, with corresponding consequent loss to those engaged in the ordinary avocations of the county. Our other bait is the squid or calamany, on which we depend for our late summer and fall fishery. Its visits are most uncertain as to season, and but rarely is the supply continuous. It is shown in evidence that in the last year this bait appeared in large quantities on the coast, but by reason of the enormous quantity taken for sale to American fishermen it soon disappeared, and at the end of the season, during which it might reasonably be supposed that a moderate quantity would be available at least occasionally, not only were numbers of American fishermen unable to obtain bait, but the local fishermen were without any supply, which fact has materially added to the amount of pauperism which the disastrous cod-fishery of the past year has inflicted upon thousands of our hard-working population.

From this evident over-fishing on our coasts, the people of this Colony reasonably apprehend the most alarming consequences. There are striking evidences of the justice of their conclusions in the present condition of the herring fishery in Fortune Bay on our south-west coast, where from over-fishing and maltreatment these fish have to such an extent abandoned that locality that for the past two or three years the operations there have been a comparative failure during the winter season, while formerly the supply was certain and unlimited. It is also well known that on the American coast large sections have been rendered barren from over-fishing, and to this fact is doubtless attributable the increasing numbers of American fishermen who now resort to the coasts of this island to pursue their avocations. Most justly, then, are the fears of the people of this Colony excited at the prospect indicated by the experience referred to, and when it is considered that our fisheries mean our all, and that a bait supply is the indispensable condition of cod-fishing, the issue involved is this question—"Shall we maintain or shall we annihilate the means on which this Colony must be dependent for its future prosperity?"

Your Committee are not unmindful of the privileges conceded to American fishermen by the Washington Treaty to take fish on our coasts, and, though sensible of the niggard and unfair dealings of the American Government in their interpretation of our rights under that instrument, we do not seek any abridgment of the concessions to which they are entitled. We freely admit their rights to fish on our coasts, and it cannot be overlooked that the continued value of this privilege must be seriously compromised in their interest if from over-fishing or other abuse our bait supply becomes seriously lessened. The fishing is not, of course, in their case, as in ours, the sole resource, but their interests must also in a degree be prejudiced by the facts adverted to, from which we ourselves must foresee evils of a character graver and more extensive as far as the interests of the British fishermen of this Colony are concerned.

In every interest then involved in our fisheries some measures of conservative restraint become a vital necessity. In the Treaty of 1818 the privileges of American fishermen on our coasts between Rameo Islands along the south and east coasts to Cape John were limited to the purposes of shelter and procuring wood and water, so jealous were the Imperial authorities of that day of any interference with the national and prescriptive rights of the fishermen of Newfoundland. Under the Treaty of Washington these rights have been enlarged to the extent of enabling American fishermen to catch fish within the limits above named; but this privilege is admittedly subject to the operation of such laws as the local Legislature shall from time to time enact, and which shall have a general application to the conduct of the fisheries. The right to take fish on our coasts and to obtain supplies of wood and water comprise the American privileges at the present time, subject to the general laws of the Colony for the government of the fishery. On all subjects lying outside the limits thus indicated the authority of the Legislature to make provision for the necessities of the people is beyond the reach of controversy. On the subject of the traffic in bait and ice, which has grown up incidentally from the operation of the Washington