

CHAPTER XI.—THE FISHERIES

CONSPECTUS

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Section 1.—The Early Fisheries

Fishing is among the earliest and most historic industries of Canada. Leaving aside inconclusive evidence in favour of authentic record, one must ascribe to John Cabot the honour of having discovered, in 1497, the cod banks of Newfoundland, when he first sighted the mainland of North America. Fishing may well be regarded as the first industry to be systematically prosecuted by Europeans in what is, to-day, the Canadian domain. It has since yielded a perennial harvest to both Europe and America. According to the Census of 1931, of 3,927,230 persons in Canada gainfully occupied in that year, 33,756 reported fishing as their principal occupation.*

A more detailed account of the history of the Atlantic fisheries is given at p. 348 of the 1934-35 Year Book.

Section 2.—The Canadian Fishing Grounds

The fishing grounds of the Dominion are of exceptional national value inasmuch as two of the four great sea-fishing areas of the world border on Canada. They fall naturally into three divisions: Atlantic, inland, and Pacific fishing grounds. A detailed description of each division, of the fish caught, and of the methods of fishing, will be found at pp. 222-225 of the 1932 Year Book.

Section 3.—The Government and the Fisheries†

Upon the organization of the Dominion Government at Confederation, the administration of the Canadian fisheries was placed under the Department of Marine and Fisheries. Early in 1930 a Department of Fisheries, in charge of its own Minister, was organized. This Department now administers all the tidal fisheries (except those of the mainland portion of Quebec, which, by agreement, are under provincial administration), the non-tidal fisheries of Nova Scotia, and the fisheries of Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The non-tidal fisheries of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia, and both the tidal and non-tidal fisheries of Quebec (except the fisheries of the Magdalen Islands) are administered by the respective provinces, although the Dominion Department does certain protective work in non-tidal waters of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia. The right of fisheries regulation for all the provinces, however, rests with the Dominion Government. (See the Fisheries Act, 22-23 Geo. V, c. 42). The expenditure of the Dominion on the fisheries in the fiscal year 1939-40, including civil government salaries, contingencies, etc., was

* See footnote 2 to Table 7, p. 225.

† Revised under the direction of Dr. D. B. Finn, Deputy Minister of Fisheries, Ottawa.