

declined, its absolute value has remained remarkably constant. With an average annual production value of approximately \$2,000,000, it has been the major source of livelihood for almost the entire native population, and in all likelihood will continue to be so into the foreseeable future.

But changing conditions affected even this long-established industry. As the population of the Northland increased with growing industrialization, the number of forest fires grew to serious proportions. By destroying the forest cover necessary to the fur bearers and to wildlife generally, the fires became a menace to those who depended on trapping for a living. In addition, the number of trappers increased to the point where over-trapping was inevitable in many areas. These factors, plus the general improvidence of those who could see no end to nature's bounty, led the Government to adopt a policy of regulating trapping intended to ensure the economical harvesting of the fur crop on a sustained-yield basis. Native game preserves were established and restrictions were placed on the number of white trappers. Control measures, such as open and close seasons, were instituted for most mammals and maximum bag limits for certain fur bearers. The first three native game preserves were established in 1923 and, since then, three more have been added; the total area under protection amounts to almost 1,000,000 sq. miles. In addition, the Government has established smaller preserves in which even natives are prohibited from trapping and hunting. A Government forest and game protective service has been established and Government scientists are engaged in a continuing study of wildlife management problems.

Efforts to broaden the economic base of the Northwest Territories through encouragement of industries subsidiary to mining led, in 1945, to the establishment of an inland fishing industry at Great Slave Lake. Fifth largest on the continent, Great Slave Lake has an area of 11,170 sq. miles. It lies only 340 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Since the Northwest Territories is wholly under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, the opportunity existed to institute a program of fishery management founded on scientific research and conservation measures. This opportunity was not lost.

The Fisheries Research Board of Canada made its first survey in 1944 and the following summer the lake was thrown open to commercial fishermen. Catch limits and fishing regulations were based on sound biological information accumulated by the Board. The original annual quota of 2,000,000 lb. of whitefish and trout has gradually been raised as a result of continuing surveys to a present level of 9,000,000 lb., an amount that covers both the summer and winter seasons. In 1953, the catch amounted to 5,700,000 lb., with a market value of \$1,700,000.

In the first season of fishing there were 42 fishermen on the lake but so profitable did this enterprise prove that, by 1953, 305 licences were issued. The opening of the Mackenzie Highway in 1948 was a vital factor in the success of the fishery, since it provided swift and economical transportation from Hay River to railhead at Grimshaw, Alta. About 90 p.c. of the catch is marketed in the United States.

The Government maintains an inspection system at the packing houses at Gros Cap and Hay River; two patrol vessels travel the lake during the summer season and, for winter work, snowmobiles are used. The industry itself uses snowmobiles extensively in winter and altogether there are 40 of them in use at Great Slave Lake. The extensiveness of the industry, and its permanence, is indicated by the fact that one of the companies has built a 56-foot refrigerated diesel freighter capable of carrying 18 tons of fish.