

**121.—NEED OF A NATIONAL LAW TO REGULATE THE SIZE OF MESH OF BOTH POUND AND GILL NETS ON THE GREAT LAKES.****By LAFLIN & CO.,***Wholesale Dealers in Oysters and Fish.*

[From a letter to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

We would respectfully call your attention to the size of the whitefish now being caught at Saint Joseph, Mich. A fisherman tells us that three years ago large quantities of young whitefish were put in the water there. This spring the same whitefish are being taken out by the tons. The fish are small, only half grown, and will not endure warm weather long after being taken; they are about 8 or 9 inches in length. If they were allowed to grow another year they would increase in quantity and the same fish be a No. 1 fish. The reckless waste of the fish is due to the men fishing there with small mesh gill-nets. We are told some of the meshes are only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches. If there was a national law preventing the using of any gill-nets less than  $4\frac{3}{4}$  or  $4\frac{7}{8}$  inches mesh, these small fish would escape and mature into good solid fish. The majority of regular fishermen around the lakes favor stringent laws preventing the taking of small fish, but take no steps, as they don't want to incur the ill-will of their neighbors who use small nets.

CHICAGO, ILL., (No. 40 State street), April 25, 1884.

We send you a sample in alcohol of the quality of whitefish caught at Saint Joseph, Mich. You can see the fish are immature, and if not caught for one or two years more would become large, besides increasing in numbers by spawning. No State law will reach these parties, for the reason that State or city officers will not push people when they depend on their popularity at home for appointment or election, and besides the mischief is done outside of the jurisdiction of the State of Michigan. Michigan City does nearly as much fishing, and that is in the State of Indiana. At the northern end of the lake it would be hard to determine which State had jurisdiction, Michigan or Wisconsin. In many cases fishermen go 20 and 30 miles away to fish and bring their fish with steam-tugs to shipping points. They could easily prove if arrested in one State that fish were caught in the waters of another State. A national law could be enforced in many places by the Life-Saving Service assisted by the revenue cutters. To limit the size of meshes of both pound and gill-nets for next season would work no hardship on fishermen, as they renew their seines each spring. The fish are literally caught out in Lake Michigan, and where there ought to be a large source of food supply to a rapidly filling country, it is being foolishly wasted by a few men to make a living for the time being, who do not intend to stay in the business permanently.

A law ought also to be enacted regulating the depth of water in which fishing should be done during the spawning season, and there should not be the reckless waste of trout there is each fall. They are caught all around the lake in such quantities that many are valueless and cannot be sold for food. In Green Bay and at Ahnapee, Wis., and in fact all along the western shore of Lake Michigan, trout are caught by the ton and thrown away, because the demand falls off when the catch increases. They are not fit to salt. In June sturgeon are caught and killed for the value of the caviare, when the fish are so abundant that they scarcely bring the cost of transportation. In the spring, all through the Green Bay country, fine large roe pike are recklessly taken from the water and wasted for almost nothing. If, when caught, they were thrown back into the water their spawn would increase the supply for future use. We would suggest to you to write to H. O. Wilson & Co., at Saint Joseph, Mich. They fish with large mesh nets, and they could probably give you other facts. One fisherman, when told he was doing wrong in fishing out such small fish, laughingly remarked that the United States were going to put 10,000,000 more in at Saint Joseph this year for their benefit. We give you a few names of intelligent fishermen at different points around the lake. If you wish to get their ideas, one and all talk of favoring a stringent national law—even those now busy catching small fish.

Names of fishermen and their addresses: G. H. Smith & Sons, Cedar Grove, Wis.; John Borkenhagen, 490 Second avenue, Milwaukee, Wis.; Louis Schultze, fisherman, Milwaukee, Wis.; F. Kocher, fisherman, Milwaukee, Wis.; H. von Ells, fisherman, Milwaukee, Wis.; H. O. Wilson & Co., Saint Joseph, Mich.; Fagan & Fairchild, Sheboygan, Wis.; F. Kochn & Son, Sheboygan, Wis.; Daane Bros., Vostville, Wis.; N. Nigette, Two Rivers, Wis.; John McDonald, Ahnapee, Wis.; E. S. Minor, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.; J. O. Lindquist, Menekaukee, Wis.; E. Boaler, Green Bay, Wis.; L. Bainbridge, Menomonee, Mich.; LeClair & Gundersen, Jacksonport, Wis.; N. Saunders, Fayette, Mich.; Feltus & Bro., Fayette, Mich.; Ainsworth & Co., Sault de Ste. Marie, Mich.; A. Booth & Sons, Chicago, Ill., fish at Escanaba, Mich.; C. Endress & Son, Whitefish Point, Mich.; Boutin & Mahan, Bayfield, Wis.; I. Chambers & Bro., Saint Ignace, Mich.; I. Moule & Co., Saint James, Mich.; R. Connable & Son, Petoskey, Mich.; Little Traverse Bay Fish Company, Harbor Springs, Mich.; Coates & Arnold, Mackinac, Mich.; M. D. Pool, Pent Water, Mich.; A. Warner & Co., Pent Water, Mich.; Cooley Levague & Co., Duluth, Minn.; Dawson & McKeone, Detour, Mich.; Powell Bros., Marquette, Mich.; Hausler Bros., South Chicago, Ill.; I. Degurgus, Ludington, Mich.; William Smith & Co., Frankfort, Mich.; Storms & Co., Montague, Mich.; Waiteman & Lanford, Montague, Mich.; Shriver Bros., Saugatuck, Mich.; Charles Kimball & Son, Michigan City, Ind.

CHICAGO, ILL., *May 7, 1884.*