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SESSIONAL PAPERS

VOLUME 7

THIRD SESSION OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OF THE

DOMINION OF CANADA

SESSION 1893



VOLUME XXVI.

Marine and Fisheries.

BRITISH COLUMBIA SALMON FISHERIES COMMISSION

1892

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

AND

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE, &c.

Marine and Fisheries.

river only to catch fish with gill-nets like in the Fraser River. I have seen several rivers up north, of course I have not stayed there every day to see, but from all the information we could gather from Indians and inhabitants we understand it was all clear water.

Q. Have you anything further, sir?—A. The reason that makes me speak of the salt water fishing is this seining is an industry for catching fish that cannot be caught otherwise owing to the physical peculiarities of the streams. Then these salmon are not fit for canning but would be a valuable fish if we could place them on the market: I think they will be a profitable fish for sale. We have not tested it but we intend to test it and think these privileges should not be stopped. We have been making a study of the coast before commencing operations.

Q. Do you understand that the same thing has occurred in other parts of the country? And you have left it to better yourself in this country?—A. No: I did not come here with that intention solely. In the Fraser River there is no need of seines, gill-nets do their business there, but in clear rivers with salmon it only lets the fish die off and no one gets the benefit of them at all—they come there and breed and die off.

Q. Do they die off?—A. Well, I understand that a salmon dies always at four years old.

Q. Do you see fish coming down after spawning?—A. Oh, yes: I have seen dog-fish coming down after spawning.

Q. Many persons think that all fish die that go up the Fraser River?—A. Well, a great many die anyway.

Q. Do you adhere to the close season up there?—A. I don't think they fish on Sundays up there—not for salmon.

Q. What do you think about the license fee?—A. Well, that is a pretty hard question for me to answer.

Q. You only pay \$5 up there?—A. Well, of course, I am not in the cannery business, and it would not be right for me to interfere in the cannery business.

Q. But we want all the evidence we can get?—A. Well, I think we are all trying to get licenses as low as possible, if we get them at all.

Mr. ARMSTRONG.—Mr. Chairman, this room is very close and the atmosphere oppressive, we have a large number in here and the room is not large, and I would move that we adjourn for 15 minutes.

Mr. WILMOT.—Very well, it is rather close here, this Commission is adjourned for 15 minutes.

Intermission.

The Commission resumed business at 4 p.m.

Mr. FADER.—Mr. Chairman, before you proceed with a fresh witness I would like to be allowed to state that I think fishermen holding salt-water licenses should be allowed to come inside of the boundary to the banks of the sand heads, and persons with fresh-water licenses should not go beyond half way to the straits.

CHARLIE CAPLIN, a Siwash, Chief of the Musquam Indian Band, was duly sworn. Being unable to speak English sufficiently well to give evidence, Mr. John Rose acted as interpreter, and was sworn to translate correctly the questions put to the witness and his replies.

The witness handed in the following note to Mr. Commissioner Armstrong by way of introduction:—

“W. J. ARMSTRONG, Esq.,

“DEAR SIR, The bearer of this is the Tsee of the Musquam Indians and wishes to express his grievance to you with regard to getting fishing licenses, &c., for himself and his Indians.

“He seems rather excited, and, if possible, I wish you could give him a hearing.

“Yours respectfully,

(Signed)

“JAMES WISE.

“New Westminster, B.C., 23rd February, 1892.”

By Mr. Wilnot :

Q. Well, what is it the chief wants?—A. (After being interpreted.) He wants to tell you that it is about licenses—there are lots of Indians on the same ranch as himself and they can't get licenses.

Q. How is it they cannot get licenses?—A. He says he don't know what is the reason, but it has been for lots of times—some Indians get licenses, but he could never get one.

Q. Ask him how many Indians get licenses?—A. Ten Indians get licenses on his ranch.

By Mr. Armstrong :

Q. Ten Indians of his tribe?—A. Ten only.

By Mr. Wilnot :

Q. Where do they fish when they get licenses?—A. They fish always on the North Arm of the Fraser.

Q. What do they fish with?—A. With gill-nets, the same as whitemen.

Q. They follow the same regulations as are given by the department for whitemen?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do they pay the same fee?—A. Just the same, sir.

Q. Do they fish for their own use, or for sale to canneries?—A. They fish for sale to the canneries.

Q. Are there many other Indians besides these ten who fish for the canneries, without licenses?—A. Ten more fish for the canneries without licenses.

Q. How do they fish without licenses?—A. They work by the day, sir.

Q. Do any work on shares?—A. They always work by the day.

Q. What usual price per day do they get?—A. \$2 for a net-man, and \$1.50 for a boat-puller.

Q. The principal grievance is then that more Indians cannot get licenses to fish on their own account?—A. He grumbles also about the depth of the nets; he thinks they are killing salmon too fast down at the mouth of the river.

Q. Does that apply to canneries and fishermen as well?—A. Well, he says it is not right that one should be deep and the other shallow fishing in the same waters.

Q. What kind of net does his ten Indians fish with who have licenses?—A. Twenty-five mesh-nets; generally thirty is about the run.

Q. How many meshes deep are the nets that he says are too deep?—A. Most of the whitemen use fifty-mesh nets.

Q. They don't generally work in the same waters as whitemen?—A. Oh, yes; all fish in the same waters.

Q. They fished in the north arm of the Fraser?—A. Yes.

Q. All the ten Indians fished there?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. How far do they fish out from the mouth of the north arm into the Straits?—A. About a quarter of a mile from the mouth, off the Island.

Q. From Sea Island? How far out from Sea Island do they fish?—A. They go out about two miles from the island.

Q. What would be the average of salmon caught by each Indian in a season?—A. Last summer one of them caught 5,000 during the season.

Q. Would all be sockeyes?—A. All sockeyes.

Q. Is not 5,000 a large number?—A. Yes; quite a large number.

Q. They would not average that?—A. No, sir.

Q. What do they get per fish?—A. \$15 a hundred last year, and \$10 a hundred the year before.

Q. Do they fish for any special cannery?—A. Mr. Todd's and Mr. Munn's

Q. Where are their canneries?—A. Mr. Todd's is on the north arm, and Mr. Mann's on Sea Island.

Q. Are there any other canneries going up there.

Q. Todd's and Munn's piece away, but they fish to the north arm.

Q. Where is the newly

Q. Then does this Indi—A. That is their idea: al

Q. Ask him if the nets

Q. Do you know the seines are no good for salm

Q. Ask him if the w seines?—A. Oh, these both

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Q. Does he think the the river fish?—A. He thi—it will destroy the salmo

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Q. At what season of could hardly tell that, sir. killed and thrown into the

Q. Ask him whether He thinks all fishermen do not take them, they throw

Q. Is it true that fish Yes, sir; all they require

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Q. What does he cal in—he sees them in the w

Q. Does he think the or to Whitemen?—A. He

Q. throw the guts, &c., in the in the river.

Q. How does it effe thinks everybody on the l water.

Q. Would it be wise water?—A. He thinks it

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Q. than the sockeye—some them.

Marine and Fisheries.

Q. Are there any others on the north arm besides these?—A. There is a new cannery going up there.

Q. Todd's and Munn's are close together, are they?—A. No, sir: they are some piece away, but they fish together. Mr. Munn's is on Sea Island, and Mr. Todd's on the north arm.

Q. Where is the newly built one?—A. On Lulu Island.

Q. Then does this Indian think that these deep nets are too destructive to salmon?

—A. That is their idea; all the Indians think they are too deep.

Q. Ask him if the nets drag near the bottom?—A. Yes; they do.

Q. Do you know the difference between a seine and a gill-net?—A. Yes; but seines are no good for salmon in the Fraser.

Q. Ask him if the working of deep gill-nets has practically the same effect as seines?—A. Oh, these both kill the salmon the same.

Q. Ask him if the salmon are scarcer or more numerous now than years ago?—A. He says they are nothing now to what they were when he was a boy.

Q. What reason does he give for that?—A. He thinks the nets are too long and it stops the salmon from going up and has a tendency to kill them all.

Q. What does he think the salmon goes up the river for?—A. He knows well what they come in for—they come in to lay their eggs up the rivers and he doesn't want to see them killed off.

Q. Does he think the amount of fishing now, if continued, would seriously injure the river fish?—A. He thinks it will in course of time if the long nets are kept going—it will destroy the salmon in time.

Q. Has he seen many dead salmon far up in rivers or in lakes?—A. Yes; he has seen lots of dead salmon up the creeks, some floating, some half-dead, &c.

Q. At what season of the year would he see them floating and half-dead?—A. He could hardly tell that, sir, they go by the moon—he says he don't like to see the salmon killed and thrown into the river after caught.

Q. Ask him whether he knows if a large number are thrown into the river?—A. He thinks all fishermen do it—when fishermen have a great quantity and cannerys cannot take them, they throw them overboard.

Q. Is it true that fish not adapted for the canneries are given to the Indians?—A. Yes, sir; all they require and can take away.

Q. Are the quantities so large that Indians cannot take them away, and are the rest thrown away?—A. If it is not good the Indians will not take it but throw it away.

Q. To what extent, so far as numbers go, has he seen thrown away at one time?—A. If very plentiful they do it, but if not very plentiful they take care of them.

Q. Has he seen as many as a boat-load thrown away at any one time?—A. He has seen them thrown from a boat, but they are generally on the wharfs.

Q. What does he call a boat-load?—A. Oh, he says he does not see the fish thrown in—he sees them in the water.

Q. Does he think that injurious, and the offal, does he think that injurious to fish or to Whitemen?—A. He thinks it injurious to the salmon because the siwashes never throw the guts, &c., in the water because the salmon will not cross the deposits of offal in the river.

Q. How does it effect the water for the Indian or whitemen to use?—A. He thinks everybody on the Fraser River will get sick if it is continued to be thrown in the water.

Q. Would it be wise on the part of the authorities to prevent offal going into the water?—A. He thinks it would be good if they were not thrown in.

Q. Has offal created any sickness or disease amongst the Indians?—A. He says he thinks some of them get sick by drinking the water.

Q. About the early run of fish called spring salmon do they catch them principally for market, or all sockeye?—A. They don't fish generally for spring salmon.

Q. Ask him whether as a tribe do they consider the spring salmon or the sockeye the best for their own use?—A. They would rather have the spring salmon for their food than the sockeye—some Indians will not look at the sockeye to eat—they don't like them.