

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR OF INDIAN AGENCIES
BRITISH COLUMBIA

P.O. BOX 752
KAMLOOPS, B.C.

February 17th, 1934.

10-3-12-1
Kw-G-1757

Dear Major Motherwell:-

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your 10-3-12-1 of the 9th instant, which I regret I have not been able to answer before.

As a matter of fact I think I really understood the desire of the Fisheries Department in general to do away with drag seining altogether, in the interests of the conservation of fish. I also note that you state that it was felt that the Department had at least some moral obligation in permitting the Indians to fish in this manner. To the Department of Indian Affairs, of course, that is one of the main reasons for our desire that this privilege should continue. The main reason, however, for this moral right, is an even more important economic one in that most of the Coast Indians are tied down to certain Reserves where they can follow no agricultural pursuits, and as they are not free agents, as white men are, it is necessary to protect them in their earnings as fishermen so that they shall not become a charge upon the public purse. As you know, at the present moment the fishing industry certainly seems overcrowded, and I believe myself that the number of licenses issued will have to be restricted, because there seems to be so many trying to earn a living by fishing that very few are actually paying expenses. Therefore, any special concession which can be given to the Indians, owing to their status as Indians, are very much valued both by the Department and the Indians themselves.

You state that when drag seining was originally permitted on the Nimpkish River there was no purse seining on the outside, but that now there are thirty to forty such nets operating. It seems to me that there are too many purse seiners around, and as this is an expensive method of catching fish in the way of cost of gear and boats, and from the Indian point of view they are better off drag seining, which does not put them so heavily in debt to the canneries. After all, there are not so many areas still reserved for drag seining amongst the Indians, and I am strongly of the opinion, from their point of view, that this privilege should be retained for them if possible, and my whole idea in my original letter was to get the Department to try, in cooperation with the Indians, to regulate such drag seining.

From my point of view, the whole gist of the matter in dealing with the Indians, amounts to this. If the Indians are forced by laws pertaining to the Indians,

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Supervisor of Fisheries,
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Winch Building, VANCOUVER, B.C?

Major J.A. Motherwell

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to remain on the Coast and try to make a living out of fishing, they have no alternative like the white man, who, if he wants to use it, has the whole world at his disposal. Therefore, seeing that the Indians, anyhow for the next two or three generations, will have to remain on the Coast, we must try and give them an even better chance to make a livelihood than the unrestricted white man. And this is so even looking upon it from an entirely selfish point of view to save the cost of keeping them on the tax-payers' purse.

Of course, in referring to the Indians, I am not bothering about any Indians who have agricultural land or to those like the Vancouver ones who can get a certain amount of living out of local employment.

Yours very truly,



(Geo. S. Pragnell)
Inspector of Indian Agencies.

GSP/S.

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