

From Terry Glavin, October 23, 2010:

The Public Interest in The Conservation of Fraser Sockeye and the Management of The Fisheries: *Précis* for a presentation to the "Cohen Commission" on October 28, 2010: Conservation, Sustainability and Stewardship.

My presentation will focus on the current paradigm in the conservation, sustainability and stewardship of the Fraser's sockeye runs and the sockeye fisheries in the context of its origin in certain cultural, historic and economic trends that coalesced during the 1990s, first in an environment of heightened public anxiety and alarm, but ultimately in elevated public expectations. To force the transition from a catastrophic 19<sup>th</sup> century management culture proved to be not so much a Herculean task at all. It turned out to be more along the lines of the task to which the Gods condemned Sisyphus: To roll a great boulder uphill, only to have it roll back down again, and on it goes like this for eternity.

The lofty language of the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity anticipates that Fraser sockeye will be conserved for their "ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values." It just so happens that these purposes reflected with an astonishing degree of precision the concerns that British Columbians were consistently expressing about salmon in those days, broadly and locally, generally and specifically. At the same time, aboriginal communities were demonstrating their growing determination to re-establish their customary fisheries, in their traditional, in-river fishing areas, and the courts were increasingly confirming the rights of aboriginal communities to do so.

The confluence and the consistency of these purposes forced lawmakers, policy makers and industry stakeholders to move towards a wholly new management paradigm, currently articulated (for better and for worse) in the Wild Salmon Policy. The public trust is central to its prospects for success. The fundamental challenge lies in identifying, restoring, strengthening and conserving the genetic and spatial architecture of the Fraser's salmon runs. Everything else follows from that. British Columbians and Canadians should not be expected to tolerate the management expedience of any "trade-offs" that put salmon runs at risk or in any way diminish the resilience of the Fraser's sockeye runs.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to the new paradigm's uphill climb is the absence of sufficient diversity, innovation, and capacity for flexibility in the means and methods available to the commercial harvest sector. Given those conditions, and given what science has come to know about the inherently daunting complexities of mixed-stock fisheries management, the gross imprecision in forecasting and estimating run strengths, and the limits of human agency in determining overall abundance, unanticipated events and management errors are bound to occur. The labour of Sisyphus may well be our inescapable fate. But to err on the side of hubris or mere expedience is to betray the public trust, and the public should only be expected to tolerate management decisions that err on the side of caution. In that context, the central question that faces this Commission may be the extent to which "the policies and practices of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans" put the backs of the Department's officials into rolling the boulder uphill, or whether those policies and practices err on the side of rolling it back down again.