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Proposed report for Mr Erwen for BC PA annual meeting July 1904. Not used owing to visits and promises of Messrs Rollins & Cronyn

Gentlemen:-

Since our last meeting another season has passed and I am sorry to say it has been on the Fraser the worst I have experienced during my thirty eight years connection with the British Columbia industry. While poor years have been felt in the past, we were to some extent prepared for them, but the pack obtained in 1899 has caused us to anticipate somewhat similar conditions for 1903, and our disappointment was so much the greater when our calculations were so upset.

In the north also we met with an unexpected shortage. With the exceptions of Rivers Inlet and Bella Coola, all our northern properties obtained but a partial pack, and even in the districts mentioned the packs secured were only average ones.

It is an utter impossibility to ascribe this falling off to any particular cause. While unquestionably salmon propagation — both natural and artifical — have suffered from the neglect of the government, and the wasteful methods of those interested in the industry, and while this is a matter which all should earnestly strive to correct; still this is only one of the many causes which operated to our disadvantage in 1903. Of all the districts in Northern British Columbia, Rivers Inlet has been more persistently fished than any other place, and yet it produced better results in 1903 than the Skeena or Naas rivers. On the

latter especially the boats annually employed during the past few years, have been much under what the rivers could safely give employment to, and yet despite this, the failure there was equally as marked as it was on the Skeena.

Had we been fortunate enough to secure even an average season the statement presented covering our operations to the end of 1903 would have been much more satisfactory. In a company of the size of ours the fixed charges are necessarily very large, and when all these are taxed against a smaller pack than we were prepared for, it adds materially to the cost of per case of what we do obtain. We have the satisfaction however of knowing that the cause of this state of affairs was beyond our control, and it must not be supposed that because we have had in 1902 and 1903, two of the worst seasons on record, the future will not be brighter. While these years may make us more cautious in preparations, the effects of the concentration of plants will give us equal packing results at a lesser expense than enjoyed in the past, and even if our catch should not average as high as in years gone by, the economies in operating should more than counterbalance such loss.

As the statements which the Secretary will probably read, will show most of the details of our past operations, it is unnecessary for me to consider them further in this report. I however feel it my

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duty to point out that there are other sources besides lack of fish, which may operate to the disadvantage of the association and which should be rectified without delay.

It is useless to try and pretend that under its past management the association has had a harmonious career. That dissensions existing amongst those composing the directorate, is a matter of public notoriety, the discussion of which cannot possibly be of advantage to us. In questions of this kind the root of the evil should be gone after. If the present conflicting factions remain on the board the same differences of opinion will prevail, as it is preposterous to suppose the mere act of a re-election will revolutionize their feelings or beliefs. The company's interests cannot prosper with a continuation of the friction of the past, and whether the board you elect ~~[illegible]~~ contains a majority of practical canners, or non practical shareholders, you should at least see that it is entirely composed of men who will work as a unit for the association welfare.

As one shareholder to another I would state that in my opinion the board, as at present constituted, has too few practical cannerymen on it, and I believe that the majority have their views too much influenced by those who from the standpoint of technical knowledge are incompetent to advise. As a result those assuming

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active charge of the associations management have their operations hampered by too much red tape methods. and a board of directors composed largely of practical canners could easily perceive the necessity of a freer rein being given to the executive, if the company is to be operated as profitably as an individual business could be done.

I consider it advisable for shareholders to instruct the directors, who are simply their mouthpieces in the management of the association, as to what policy should be pursued in the future. I would suggest that the duties of General Manager and Secretary should be clearly defined, so that each shall restrict his efforts to his own department, and thus eliminate the interference of the past, when it has been difficult to learn from the instructions given, whether the Association did not possess two General Managers instead of one.

I would also suggest that the person filling the responsible position of General Manager should be instructed to spend as much of his time as is possible visiting the associations properties. In no other way can a proper knowledge be obtained of what is being done, or what should be done, and had the present management adopted this policy before expressing opinions, or committing themselves to any line of policy, I am sure the ~~results~~ conclusions arrived at would have been very different.

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As President of the Association, and as a member of the executive committee, it may be said that I am jointly responsible for the ~~general~~ existing state of affairs. I however decline such responsibility as my presence has never been requested at any meetings of the executive; I have found it almost impossible to obtain particulars of what was being done, particularly as regards our northern plants. Even when I repeatedly tried to consult the other members of the executive on matters appertaining to my own district I have not succeeded in obtaining any expressions of opinion. I have been told to act upon my own judgement, and while I may have obtained better results by doing so, as long as they accept the positions, ~~they do~~ the ~~other~~ members of the executive should also be compelled to accept their full share of the responsibilities attached to those positions.

It is too early as yet to form any definite opinions as to the present season's pack, especially on the Fraser, where as the records show the bulk of the pack has always been ~~put~~ secured in August, and often not before the tenth of the month. I believe however that the association will prove its ability to do what was expected from it at the commencement, as soon as we are favored with one good season's clean up, and with a board of directors whose sole and united ambition will be the advancement of the associations welfare without regard to their private interests.