VANCOUVER, B.C., August 31st, 1904.

516

Prefontaine,

Minister of Marine & Fisheries,

OTTAWA.

Dear Sir,-

I have delayed acknowledging your letter of the 23rd inst., until such time as I thought you would have returned to Ottawa.

Besides what you learned from the various interests that interviewed you while here, and what was contained in my first letter I have little to add, save what is occasioned by your remarks re the appointment of a commission. It is in regard to this latter I more particularly write.

You stated the proposed commission would be non-political, and intimated it would consist of a Supreme Court judge and two local business men. As regards the non-political question I heartily concur in your view, but a commission comprising the elements you suggest is worse than useless in solving the question, and if good is to be accomplished you must alter your view on that phase of the proposition.

There is nothing in the problem before them which could possibly require a legal construction, consequently there is nothing to be gained by appointing a judge as a member of the proposed commission. The matter is purely a commercial and scientific one, and therefore its welfare should [illegible] hands of men of commercial and scientific training.

Two local business men are also [illegible] because they are not free from bias, and therefore [illegible]ended upon to let their true knowledge outweigh their [illegible] whenever the two come in conflict. The Salmon [illegible] is so large, its earnings are dissipated through [illegible]rent channels, and its influence upon local industrial

[illegible] so marked, that it is practically impossible to find one [illegible]ess man, in any of the Coast Cities of this province, who is [illegible] indirectly at least connected with the business. It would therefore be placing the settlement of a question of vast importance into the hands of those who would be bound to consider the effects their decision would have on their own interests.

Two local business men again would not be truly representative because they would not represent the fishermen who in their way have as much at stake as have the cannerymen. Rightly or wrongly they would suspect the proposed commissioners of being more representative of the capital than of the labor end, and thus hearty cooperation from them could neither be looked for, nor expected. In the same manner as their connection in a business way would not be as direct with the commissioners as the canners connection, they would probably suffer in a comparison where personal interest was a deciding factor with the judges.

What your department needs is to receive practical and workable advice as to what is going to further the interests of the industry as a whole, without concern as to whether some particular branch is deprived of a present remunerative interest which is held despite its detrimental consequences to the fishery itself. Such advice can only come from an entirely disinterested source, and to get such a source you must look for your instruments in some section free from our local influences.

A commission to do justice to this [illegible]t operate on entirely different lines to any we have so [illegible]rdened with. It of course wants to obtain the views of [illegible]erested in the salmon fishing, not only of the Fraser [illegible] Province as a whole, but its principal knowledge must [illegible] of the habits of the fish, their spawning environ- [illegible] enemies, and the nature and effects of the means employed

capture. It wants to thoroughly investigate not only the river and its tributaries, but Rivers Inlet, Skeena river and the other Northern Salmon streams and their tributaries, and it wants to take sufficient time to do its allotted work thoroughly, efficiently, and effectively. Its work is not an accomplishment of a few weeks or a few months. It will take a few years - three at least - of hard and well applied work, for it must acquire at the one time all the information necessary for a decision. Unlike other countries Canada does not possess any past records of actual observation that will supply such a commission with authentic data for its guidance, and such preliminary information the commission must obtain for itself.

I think the only satisfactory, and also the only competent commission is one composed of a representative of the Dominion, and a representative of the Provincial governments; both of whom should be men possessing a scientific knowledge of fish, their habits, and their requirements. A third commissioner should be a man selected by the canning interests, while a fourth should represent the fishermen. These four should then choose any additional number up to five who should all come from some interior provincial or eastern Canadian points, and who have no connection whatsoever with the industry. These latter would practically be the judges of the points brought up by the four advocates first named.

If however the two governments could agree upon one joint representative, and the vested interests could [illegible] the question would be much simplified and only one other [illegible] required; a majority ruling being all that would be [illegible] a commission should not only advise as to the needs [illegible] but also on the advisability of a local board of [illegible] such questions, and should have all necessary [illegible] whatever additional labor is found essential in order [illegible] tion and data necessary for their purposes.

#4

Amongst the reasons why a judge would not be suitable for such a commission are, first, its service requirements are more than could be expected of him, and, secondly, as the question of jurisdiction between Dominion and Province may ultimately be fought out in the courts, it might place him in a false position to act now on a commission of this nature.

With a commission as above and with powers amply for the purpose, the department should soon know what is in the best interest of the salmon industry, and can govern themselves accordingly. The settlement of all minor questions such as artificial propagation, etc. would then work themselves out, and if results did not turn out to the betterment of the industry, the government would at least have the satisfaction of knowing they had freed themselves from a reproach which up to the present time they have but too richly deserved.

Yours truly,

Henry Doyle

The Commission when eventually appointed did not include a judge but Prefontaine went back on his undertaking to appoint disinterested parties. Not one practical man was included while Owen & Hall were representatives of Canning Companies and shareholders therein. Prince & Babcock were government officials, prejudiced in favour of their own views & points before Commission hearings ever started and Prince subsequently in his capacity as adviser to the Minister of Fisheries reported to the latter official that it was not in the interest of the industry to enact legislation which as Chairman of the Commission he had specially asked should be enacted.

HD