March 8th, 1918

C.J. Desbarats,

Deputy Minister of the Naval Service,

Ottawa,

Ont.

Dear Sir:-

We are in receipt of your favour of the 19th ulto., re fishing licenses at Bella Coola.

It is a great disappointment to us that the Minister will not accede to the request of all the interested parties in this district to have the number of fishing licenses increased from 70 to 110. We have made a close study of the conditions both as to fish and spawning grounds and think this district could easily stand the increase asked for without detrimental effects to the future supply. There are sufficient white settlers in the Bella Coola valley to take up all the additional licenses proposed, and a hardship is being worked on these men in preventing their participating in the development of the fishing industry there. Furthermore the Food Controller is urging on everyone the vital necessity of producing every additional pound of food possible, and by refusing our request we are prevented from complying with his suggestion.

All of the reports we get concerning spawning ground conditions show that excepting 1917 there were plenty of fish reached the head waters, and that they were there in such numbers

as to fully warrant the issue of additional licenses. The only species that was not well represented were sockeyes, but Bella Coola while good on the cheaper fish, is not, nor never has been, a big sockeye fishery, and it would be absurd to restrict the catch of the plentiful species for the protection of one kind from which no benefit can be expected.

It is true that the heavy spawning which took place in 1917 was subsequently very largely destroyed by the unprecedented floods of this winter. But the adverse results to be expected through this catastrophe cannot possibly affect the 1918 season. We understand everyone connected with the industry in this area - including Chief Inspector Cunningham, Inspectors Williams and Whitson, and even the members of the Fishery Commission - were favourably inclined to increase the boats to 110, and we would ask that for Bella Coola at least the Department would reconsider their determination to continue the old limit of 70 licenses. Both the canneries in this district have been enlarged, additional machinery added, and heavy expenses incurred for new boats and fishing gear, in the expectation that the licenses were sure to be increased. This expenditure will be wasted if no additional licenses are granted and we think it hardly fair that after we were lead to expect more boats and spent our money in this expectation a change should be made at

the eleventh hour that upsets all our calculations. We think if the Department is not prepared to permanently increase the number of fishing licenses at Bella Coola (in view of last winter's flood conditions) they should at least grant 40 temporary licenses - for 1918 only - and let the future number be regulated by spawning ground conditions as they may appear.

In connection with the question of damage done any fishery by such catastrophes as the Bella Coola flood, we would point out that it does not follow that permanent ill effects must be expected. Bella Coola should come back the same as the Fraser river is recovering from the effects of the C.N.R. rock slides of 1913. These slides affected the humpback salmon the same as they did sockeyes, and the humpback pack of 1915 amounting to only 721,954 cases demonstrated the loss. The lesser crowding of the spawning beds in 1915 gave the parent fish better breeding conditions which probably accounts for the 1917 humpback pack totalling 1,256,326 cases - an increase of 57% over 1915. The Fraser sockeye fishery of 1921 will doubtless show a similarily gratifying recovery and Bella Coola can likewise look to the future for normal conditions to again prevail.

In the past there has been 70 licenses fished at Bella Coola - half Indians and half by Whites. <u>All</u> of the Indians are <u>attached</u> to the B.C.Packers cannery so that our Tallheo plant (under existing circumstances) can only secure their fishermen from amongst the 35 unattached Whites. Last

March 5th, 1918

G.J.Desbarats 4

season we had 21 of these while the B.C.Packers had the remaining 14, and it is only reasonable to presume that the same proportions would be maintained again this season, as naturally some fishermen will prefer remaining with the cannery they fished for in the past. It is useless for us to expect the B.C.Packers to voluntarily give up any of their boats - attached or unattached - and we see no way of an equitable division being arranged except by the Department insisting on an equitable division.

The B.C.Packers are the pioneers in the field and we concede are entitled to some advantage on this account. But they hold seining licenses covering South Bentick Arm and Quatna, which we do not share with them, and we think these seining privileges are such a very considerable advantage that we have the right to expect an even division with them of the gill net licenses. We would however be agreeable to give them, say, 5 more gill net licenses than are issued us, if we are granted equal seining privileges with them in South Bentick Arm and Quatna, and we submit this suggestion for your consideration. We think however that we should have some of the Indian licenses attached to us as it is necessary to secure Indian fishermen to insure us Indian women to help with the inside labour situation in the operation of the canning plant.

Yours truly,