

March 15th, 1917

Mr. D.J.Desbarats,

Deputy Minister of Naval Service,

Ottawa,

Ont.

Dear Sir:-

I am in receipt of your favor of the 19th ultimo asking for my opinion as to the best method for scientific investigation of new halibut and other fishing banks in the North Pacific.

For such work to be properly conducted I do not think the Government has any properly equipped vessel on this coast at the present time, although doubtless a boat like the "Malaspina" could be equipped to answer the purpose satisfactorily. Such an equipment would be similar to that which the United States Fishery Service boat "Albatross" is outfitted with, and would consist of proper sounding instruments, trolling gear, and otter trawls etc., to enable them to ascertain the nature of the marine life in the waters investigated.

The work done by the "Albatross" has been very valuable to the American fish interests, but in British Columbia there has been no work of this nature undertaken up to date, as far as I am aware. Our fisheries are of proportionately

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greater value than the American fisheries, and there is a crying need for the proper study of same. Our halibut fisheries are gradually decreasing, and it is only a question of time when the men engaged in that industry will have to turn their efforts in some other direction. When such time arrives they should have information available as to the locality of fishing areas in which other species than halibut can be taken, and any vessel which you may equip for investigating halibut life should at the same time undertake the study of all other species of edible fish.

On this coast we have exceptionally fine herring, but, so far, the capture of this fish has been restricted to the inshore waters frequented by the herring at the spawning season. At this period of their existence the herring are not in as prime physical condition as they are just previous to their migrating from their deep sea habitat to these inshore grounds, and consequently are not in as prime condition for salting and canning purposes as are the herring taken in the North Sea by steam trawlers and drifters, and taken into Scotch, English and Dutch ports and processed there.

Sometime ago, Dr. Hjort, the Norwegian authority on herring life, did very valuable work for our Government in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and investigations similar to those conducted by him should be made along the coast of British

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Columbia in the open waters lying from twenty-five to one hundred miles offshore. A vessel equipped in the manner I suggest could make investigations necessary as to herring fisheries, and once the deep sea habitat of these fish is determined the herring industry on this coast could be built up so as to rival that of Scotland; and as far as quality of the fish is concerned, I am satisfied we would not be at any disadvantage.

Outside of the herring, the deep sea habitat of other edible fish could be determined, and the expense of such an examination could be divided between the different species instead of being limited to halibut, as your original proposal calls for. To make an investigation of halibut life only I do not think would be warranted. By combining the investigation of these other edible fish with the halibut would cost practically no more as far as the operating expenses of the vessel would be concerned, and it would be better to undertake all of this examination at one time than to simply investigate the halibut life now and have to go all over the ground subsequently to determine the value and extent of the other fisheries.

If I can give you any further information
pertaining to any of these matters, I will be very pleased
indeed to do so.
HD/N Yours truly,