UNLIMITED LICENSES IN SALMON FISHING.

If the Government persist in their announced intention of throwing open cannery and fishing licenses to all British subjects the following results - amongst others - will ensue;-

1. In 1918 the British Ministry of Food had commandeered practically all the British Columbia salmon pack, with the exception of the "Chum" grade. Prices asked by Canadian packers were so much higher than American goods of equal grade were obtainable for that the British Ministry of Food demanded arbitration on prices. The arbitrators appointed by the Dominion Government were the War Purchasing Commission, and this body were furnished with all possible data covering costs of packing of both American and Canadian salmon canners.

The War Purchasing Commission awarded Canadian canners;-
$12.50 per case for 1 lb. tall Springs, against the American commandeered price of $11.00 per case.
$11.50 per case for 1 lb. tall Cohoes, against the American commandeered price of $9.00 per case.
$8.00 per case for 1 lb. tall Pinks, against the American commandeered price of $6.60 per case.

The Canadian price of tall Chum salmon was $6.75 per case, but as American goods were obtainable at $6.40 the British Ministry of Food made all their purchase of this grade from the American packers.

The War Purchasing Commission in setting these prices recognized that owing to their larger individual packs, (45,000 cases to the cannery in Southeastern Alaska against 15,000 cases to the cannery in Northern British Columbia), American salmon canners could produce

Red Spring	1 lb.	talls	for	$1.50	per	case	less	than	Canadians.
Cohoe	"	"	"	2.50	"	"	"	"	"
Pink	"	"	"	1.40	"	"	"	"	"
Chum	"	"	"	.35	"	"	"	"	"

The United States is the largest consuming country of canned salmon in the world, taking over 60% of the total production. The control of this market is safeguarded for American canners by a 15% duty on canned fish. On to-day's selling values this protection by tariff amounts to;-

Spring	talls,	$16.00	per	case	@ 15%	$2.40	per	case	protection.
Cohoe	"	12.00	"	"	" "	1.80	"	"	"
Pink	"	8.00	"	"	" "	1.20	"	"	"
Chum	"	6.40	"	"	" "	.96	"	"	"

Adding to this tariff protection the fair difference in packing costs as figured by the War Purchasing Commission, (as given above) we find that as far as the United States market is concerned American packers are protected from Canadian competition to the following extent;-

Spring	talls,	$3.90	per	case,	or 25%	on	sales	value.	
Cohoe	"	4.30	"	"	" 36%	"	"	"	
Pink	"	2.60	"	"	" 32%	"	"	"	
Chum	"	1.31	"	"	" 20%	"	"	"	

From the above it is plainly to be seen that if unlimited fishing licenses are granted in Districts Nos. 2 & 3, American canners could outfit a sufficient number of British subjects (?) with fishing gear and equipment to make it worth their while to send collecting boats for the take of fish, and transport same to Southeastern Alaska or Puget Sound. And owing to the protected trade they enjoy in their home market they could pay prices for raw fish which the British Columbia packer could not pOssibly meet. This is already actually the case in District No. 1, where unlimited licenses are granted, and where Americans are securing practically all the fish while Canadian operators stand idly by, unable to meet the competition.

2. Under the proposed International Treaty the use of purse seines is prohibited in the main sockeye fishing areas of Puget Sound. Being shut out of these waters the owners of this class of fishing appliance find themselves possessed of seine boats and seine nets worth $10,000. to $20,000. per outfit, and no place to operate them in. They face i immense loss, when along comes a benevolent Canadian government offering an unlimited field in British Columbia for these American outcasts. In the name and under the guise of British subjects they will fish our waters; American buyers will quite naturally be given a preference in the purchase of their catches; and both fish and the money paid for them will go across the International Boundary line for the enrichment of the United States, at the expense of Canada, and through the direct instrumentality of the Canadian government.

3. Fishing on the Fraser river during the sockeye season is no longer profitable, but with a limit on licenses in District No. 2, Fraser fishermen were shut out of the north. In 1919, 1337 gill net licenses were issued for the Fraser district, nearly 900 of which were taken out by Japanese. These men are bona fide fishermen of long experience, and all of them would unquestionably go to District No. 2 for sockeye fishing (returning to the Fraser for the profitable fall fishing season) if the limit on licenses were abolished.

These Japanese engage solely in fishing for their livelihood, while with white men and Indians fishing is but a seasonal occupation. As a consequence through closer application and working for a longer period the Japanese fisherman obtains greater catches, and naturally fish buyers, whether cannery owners or otherwise, prefer dealing with the labourer who produces most results.

The result of throwing fishing licenses open to all British subjects will be best illustrated by taking Skeena river for an example. In 1919 about 950 licenses were issued for this river, of which 650 were held by Japanese, leaving 300 to cover both Whites and Indians. Now assume that the Skeena canners - in anticipation of a great increase of fishermen through unrestricted licenses - should build and equip 600 new boats. This would give a total of 900 boats available after the 1919 Japanese fishermen were provided for. The past season on Skeena river

was very profitable for the fishermen and naturally most of the exodus from Fraser river would be to the Skeena. Assuming that these 900 Fraser Japanese fishermen went to Skeena river to fish, it would mean that for 900 boats the canners might have available, there would be 900 Japanese applicants - each owning his own net brought from Fraser river - and, say, 300 to 500 Whites and Indians, practically all of whom would want a net as well as boat from the cannery owner. Given these circumstances anyone placed in the canneryman's position would act just as the canneryman will act. They would give the preference to the Japanese to whom the smallest advance would have to be made and from whom the largest return could be anticipated. The result would be that Skeena gill net fishing would become a complete monopoly of the Japanese, and Whites and Indians would have to seek some other occupation to make a living.

What would happen on Skeena river would prevail throughout the Province. To-day the Indians of District No. 2 earn large sums each season which they spend in Prince Rupert and other such centres. White fishermen also are gradually settling in Prince Rupert so as to be near the seat of fishing operations, and their monetary disbursements contribute largely to the welfare of the community. But with Japanese driving them out of the business neither Whites nor Indians would make their present earnings; no money would be available for local tradesmen; and even the sums paid the Japanese for fish would mostly be sent out of the country - to enrich Japan at the expense of Canada.

4. While the above deals more particularily with the question of fishing licenses, the removal of limitation of cannery licenses would be equally disasterous. Two successive Governments admitted they lacked sufficient knowledge upon which to decide what was best for the British Columbia salmon industry, and therefore appointed Commissions (1905 and 1917) to investigate and advise them what should be done. Both these commissions came out flat footed in pronouncing restrictive measures absolutely necessary for the preservation of the industry. Since the 1917 Commission sat conditions have become worse instead of better. Rivers Inlet has failed to put up satisfactory packs for three years in succession. The installation of traps near Cape Fox, Alaska, has seriously decreased the Naas river runs. Freshet conditions in 1917 (October) scoured out the streams from Seymour Narrows to Skagaway, destroying the recently deposited spawn. The result of this freshet was a 50% decrease in the 1919 pack of Pink salmon, (the shortage is from 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 cases); a similar percentage of decrease can be looked for with Cohoes and Chums in 1920; and a partial decrease in sockeyes in 1921 and 1922.

The 1917 Commission advocated a five year period without further increase in licenses for either fishermen or canneries, and Nature has since emphasized the need of same. But with the end of the war it was essential our returned soldiers should not only be given employment, but should be encouraged to engage in occupations that promised them the greatest remuneration. The Government very wisely and

very justly made a place for the soldiers in our fisheries. Many men engaged in the industry in 1919 and on the whole made good money despite their inexperience. They gained sufficient skill and knowledge to insure themselves greater profits in the years to come. These men in the days of their ignorance as to fishing conditions had been strong in their advocacy of unlimited licenses, but one season taught them the fallacy of this idea, and before the Department sprang their latest surprise the returned soldiers organizations already had petitioned the Government to make no change from the conditions that prevailed in the 1919 season.

There must be a proportionated ratio between the number of canneries and the number of fishing licenses. Too few canneries would prevent the fishermen disposing of all their catches and waste would ensue: too many canneries would mean some would go to the wall, and by the survival of the fittest the proper ratio once more become established - but only after unnecessary hardships and losses. In 1908 a boat rating was established to divide the fishermen amongst existing canneries so each would have sufficient to ensure profitable operation. Thus for fishermen and canners was the industry placed on a just and stable basis. But since 1908 the Government has increased the number of canneries 50% without a corresponding increase in the number of fishermen, and to-day, in some areas, the canneries are operating at a loss. To further increase the burden on established canneries by granting still more cannery licenses, without also increasing the fishermen, would cause those to fall who are already tottering on the edge of disaster.

Presumably the Government by their proposed action have prominently in mind the welfare and employment of our returned soldiers. To further this laudable object they propose the following;-

(a.) Still further increase the number of cannery and fishing licenses despite two Royal Commissions of their own appointment having strongly reported against such action, and despite the depletion known to have occurred since the Commission of 1917 reported.

(b.) Force the catching of fish out of the hands of Whites and Indians and into the hands of Japanese and Americans who will send the proceeds of their labour out of the country.

(c.) Destroy the canning industry in British Columbia in favour of the tariff protected industry of Alaska and Puget Sound, and turn over to the Americans not only the profit contained in the fish itself but all earnings of labour, manufacture of boxes, cans, and other commodities entering into the production of canned salmon.

(d.) Retard the growth of Prince Rupert and other settlements in District No. 2, by depriving them of the earnings of Whites and Indians which in the past have been spent with their tradesmen.

(e.) Providing a new field of operation for the American purse seiner when his own Government by Treaty takes his livelihood from him, and while showering these unsolicited benefits on the American, legislating our own White and Indian fishermen out of business in this Province.

For years it has been the policy of the Fisheries Department to prepare legislation, to announce it, and then enquire if what they

propose is suitable. Despite frank and explicit promises that no steps will be taken until arguments pro and con are submitted and discussed, the same old policy prevails of "shoot first and enquire afterwards." No Commission Reports; no consideration for vested rights of fisherman or canners; no opinion of even the B. C. officials of their own service, appears to receive consideration in preparing their case. They travel along the same old Departmental rut, apparently unable to see what is going on except in the well worn path before them. For 35 years they have been operating sockeye hatcheries on lines directly opposed to the natural habits and instincts of the species; their hatchery operations have been more responsible than any other cause for the depletion of the Fraser river fishery; and yet when one of their own hatchery superintendents demonstrates the fallacy of their present system and points out other methods which contain abundant promise of success, they make no effort to substitute the new plan for the old one. With eggs and hatchery men both available for rearing sockeyes by the new method they are criminally wasting the precious eggs in the obsolete style that for 3½ decades has shown no beneficial results. With the "upper" Fraser waters barren of sockeye runs from which new schools might be established, they are taking no steps to establish such runs by planting eggs shipped in from other points. With American traps threatening the extirmination of Naas river sockeyes, they exhibit no efforts to stay the destruction. But when it comes to legislation that nobody wants; to policies that seemingly are only half considered; and to measures that, while benefiting none, work hardships on all, the Fisheries Department shines forth with such a strong light and creates such an intense heat (of indignation) that we in British Columbia think Hell is but another name for Ottawa.