

## PROVINCIAL FISH COMMISSIONS.

Over 50 years ago the State of Massachusetts realized that to obtain best results it was advisable to put its fisheries under the control of a commission. The success met with was so pronounced that other states shortly adopted the plan until to-day practically every state in the Union has its local board of commissioners.

Under the local commission form of administration it was found more attention was given to the protection and development of this natural resource; greater efforts made to re-stock depleted areas; more encouragement given to private enterprise, such as trout farming operations; and greater knowledge was obtained of fishing streams and how they could be made more productive.

Where the territory is of vast extent, and where those responsible for fishery protection have a multitude of other matters occupying their attention, the same care and consideration is not possible as could be secured when fishery administration is divorced from all other interests and placed under the complete control of those familiar with local conditions.

One of the functions of a fish commission is to secure eggs of trout and other game fishes and hatch them in suitable localities. After the egg sac has been absorbed the young fry are sold to stock privately owned streams and ponds. In the U. S. there is a large and constantly growing demand for game fish fry, and naturally many of the applicants lack the necessary knowledge of properly caring for their purchases. It is for the commission to decide whether the waters intended to be used are suitable, and whether the young fish to be introduced will prove a benefit or detriment to the locality. Naturally such intimate supervision is not possible unless each province has its own local commission, familiar with the waters under its jurisdiction, and readily accessible for guidance and advice to those requiring instruction.

It can readily be seen that if one central authority controlled the fish culture and distribution of the entire Dominion those districts farthest from the seat of control would not receive the same attention that nearer and more thickly populated sections would receive. Neither would such central authority learn as quickly the needs of isolated districts, nor provide as well for an adequate distribution of suitable game fish fry.

Trout farming is an industry that has assumed large proportions in many of the eastern states as well as in the province of Ontario. In the western states and provinces such enterprise has been of much slower growth owing to the local streams not having been so depleted of their natural stock. But the introduction of motor vehicles and the consequent betterment of roads all throughout the country, has greatly increased the facility by which distant trout streams are made accessible to the city angler. As a result such streams are being fished to an extent that threatens the extirmination of their game fishes. Unless something is done to offset this drain it is only a question of a short time before angling will become one of the lost arts.

To-day in our western provinces, short as has been the advent of our white settlers, it is necessary to go many miles from the centers of population to obtain good fishing. Streams nearer at hand that 25 years ago teemed with trout are to-day practically worthless to the angler. Water conditions are the same as they were formerly but the fish are not there, nor has any real attempt been made under Dominion administration to restore to such streams the fish life for which they to-day are as suitable as they ever were.

The depletion already manifested in streams west of the Rocky Mountains has turned the attention of many to the profit to be derived from trout farming. Many are now engaging in this form of industry, and have found it very remunerative. In at least one instance a very profitable business has been established by rearing trout to a marketable age and then permitting anglers to cast their flies over the ponds containing the fish and make their own catches. The fisherman is sure of a good basket and of the same sport he would obtain from stream fishing. The accessibility of the ponds to his place of residence enables him to indulge in his favourite pastime oftener than would be possible if he had to visit good trout streams, which to-day are many miles away from his place of business. The charge made for this fishing is the same as the pond owner could obtain from the city fishmonger, but even in paying this the angler gets his catch at less than it would cost for a trip to the more distant localities where wild trout are still available.

Another advantage is that such fishing is obtainable during that portion of the year that closed seasons are established on stream fishing. The law provides that trout privately reared can be offered for sale at any time desired. In this way a profitable market is assured for pond raised trout when no wild trout can be disposed of, and naturally the price obtainable is higher than during the open season for trout fishing.

But whether for private pond cultivation or the restoring of natural fishing waters it is essential that more energetic and intensive measures be taken without delay. The very lack of such effort under the present administration is reason enough to warrant the adoption of a new system. Central control was the primary method in practically every country in the world, and the fact that this has been almost universally supplanted by local commissions demonstrates that most intelligent governments consider the former method ineffective and obsolete. "The old order changeth, giving place to the new" is the rule of the world to-day, and Canadians should apply this truism to the administration of their fisheries as well as the other momentous matters they have to deal with. As compared to Massachusetts we are already 50 years behind the times and the change should certainly be delayed no longer.

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