

THE FORUM

Under this head will be published communications upon any subject of general interest to the community. The articles should be brief—not over 500 words, unless dealing with matters of great importance—must be free from personalities, and must be signed by the writer. The Herald is not responsible for any opinions which may be advanced by contributors to this department and reserves the right to determine whether or not contributions are suitable for publication.

OUR FISHING INDUSTRY

Seattle, May 24, 1919.

Editor Herald:
However indifferent the people of the state of Washington may be to the destruction of our great salmon fishery, it is a matter of great concern to the governments of the United States and Canada.

Foreseeing the destruction of the sockeye salmon, which has since come to pass, the American and Canadian governments started 12 years ago to prevent it. To the highest authorities of the two countries it appears a crime against humanity and civilization to let this great source of food supply be destroyed or depleted. And for what purpose? Merely to satisfy the greed of a comparatively small number—three-fourths of whom are aliens and 40 per cent of whom are alien enemies of the country—and a small coterie of cannerymen who have been profiting thereby. A government report just issued says that the North Pacific coast salmon cannerymen's profits last year averaged 52 1/2 per cent and in individual instances reached to over 100 per cent.

It was to prevent the annihilation of the sockeye salmon that 12 years ago the American and Canadian governments appointed high commissions to investigate conditions and negotiate a treaty which would avert the destruction which threatened. It was ratified by the American senate and the Canadian parliament, but was never effective because the United States congress would not pass the necessary laws to make it effective.

Refusal by congress to do so may have been justified because of the discrimination in the treaty in favor of the British Columbia fishermen. The fishing interests, largely at the instigation of the aliens engaged therein, have been successful thus far in preventing any interference or curtailment of their operations by either treaty or enactment of state law, raising the cry that "If the Americans did not catch the fish the Canadians would." And the Canadians, angered by the failure of the American congress to act on the treaty, withdrew many of their restrictions so that the work of extermination went forward more rapidly than ever. The result is that today the great sockeye salmon run of Puget sound is hardly anything more than a memory.

In the hope that the fishing interests had profited by the lesson of the almost total destruction of the sockeye run, and moved by war's necessities, the American and Canadian governments again in 1917 appointed joint high commissions to investigate the sockeye salmon fishery of Puget sound and British Columbia and to negotiate another treaty which would permit of the two national governments, with the co-operation of the governments of the state of Washington and the province of British Columbia, taking up the work of rehabilitating this great fishery—of such importance nationally and internationally as a food supply.

As fish commissioner of the State of Washington I accepted an invitation and sat as a member of the sub-committee which conducted the preliminary investigation for the international high commissions. Because of the previous attitude of the Washington fishing interests, which the members of the high commissions held responsible for the defeat of the 1910 treaty, the new high commissions were at first for negotiating a treaty which would have taken the control of our fishery entirely out of our hands and have vested it in the hands of the two federal governments, or of a joint international fishery commission appointed by them.

Now, the constitution of the United States gives to each state absolute title to its fish and game. The fishery of Washington is by far the most valuable of that of any state in the Union. It is our third greatest resource, being ranked only by agri-

culture and lumbering. It is capable of immense development, and by proper handling by our legislature could ever insure the people of this state and of a goodly portion of the United States of an abundance and cheap food supply.

For that reason I fought strenuously to have the treaty recognize the state of Washington's right of ownership of its fishery. And finally the high commissions agreed to this, conditioned upon our state legislature passing laws in accordance with the treaty provisions. As far as these provisions were known to me, I incorporated them into the fisheries code presented to the last legislature. Owing to delay caused by the war, the treaty did not reach Olympia until our legislative session was half over—so I was forced to present the code before the treaty's arrival with a memorandum, however, calling attention to the existence of the treaty and the necessity for complying with it in order to retain our ownership of our sockeye fishery.

Instead of handling our fishery wisely and intelligently so as to maintain and increase it so as to make a profit, what are we doing with it? At the behest of the Austrian alien enemy lobby, which prevented any action by the last legislature, we are not only allowing its destruction to proceed almost unimpeded, but we are being compelled to shut down half of our state hatcheries because these same enemy alien Austrians told the last legislature that it could not even pass a bill which would have secured the state less than three-fourths of one per cent of the value of the fish that are taken, but which would nevertheless have given us sufficient moneys to have operated our hatcheries and thus tended, in a measure at least, to perpetuate our supply.

What do you think of this, citizens of the state of Washington, who own these fish, but who are today being compelled to pay more for fish than for beef, save for the choicer cuts. And remember that the state hatches and owns these fish and that the cost of raising them is nothing, while the cost of raising beef has certainly increased in the last few years. In six years the price which the fisherman received for their fish has increased from one hundred to in some instances twenty-five hundred per cent.

The aliens who take three-fourths of the fish secured from the waters of our state and the cannerymen who stand with them and profit by their operations opposed and secured the defeat of the fisheries code which I prepared for introduction into the last legislature to accomplish the rehabilitation and perpetuation of our fisheries.

Now these same people are opposing the ratification of the second treaty which has been negotiated by the international high commissions of the United States and Canada, which is seeking to accomplish the same thing.

Are these aliens and alien enemies and selfish cannery interests to be permitted to entirely destroy this great food supply, which perhaps never can be replaced—and at the same time destroy one of the great industries of the state?

It is very evident that no international high commission which can be appointed, nor that any bill which can be drawn by the fish commissioner of the state of Washington, which has regard for the fishery of this state, can please the aliens who are in control of them and those selfish cannery interests which are allied with them. Is it not high time that the fishery of the state of Washington should be administered in the interest of all the people who own it rather than in the interest of a very few who are tremendously profiting from it?

Respectfully,
L. H. DARWIN,
State Fish Commissioner.

MEMORIAL DAY PROGRAM

At 2:00 o'clock a parade will form at the Palace hotel and proceed to Reaney park. The college band will lead, followed by the G. A. R., the W. R. C., the Spanish War Veterans, the returned soldiers, the Boy Scout troops and citizens.

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my16tf
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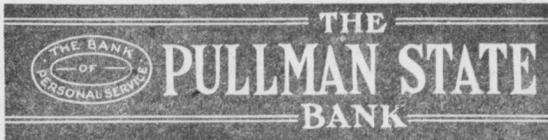
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