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Commissioner of Fisheries Telis Why Banks and River are Being Depleted.

LOCAL VIEWPOINT CLEARLY EXPRESSED

That the halibut does not begin to propagate until it is eleven years of age was one of the interesting statements made by J. P. Babcock, commissioner of fisheries, at the Board of Trade meeting on Thursday afternoon. The age of the fish is indicated by its weight and length. As most of the halibut taken by the fishermen are younger than eleven years there is practically no propagation on most of the banks. It is also believed that there is little migration on the part of these fish from one bank to another, hence the impossibility of any increase and the certainty that the banks would eventually be denuded of fish.

Fleet Increased

The catch had increased, Mr. Babcock said, because of the increase of the fleet and the finding of new banks. Now there is evidence to show that the catch of each bank is declining.

International Action.

The steps to stop this depletion! of the banks would have to be of an international nature. A committee which had investigated the matter had handed in its report which was said to be unanimous but so far no information had been given out as to the recommendations which had been made. In all probability the first news in regard to it would come from the United States Senate when a measure was introduced with a view to a treaty between theUnited States and Canada in which the State of Washington would have to concur.

Positions Reversed.

The State of Washington was in a different position to British Columbia, for whereas British olumbia had no control whatever over the fisheries within her borders, the State of Washington had absolute control of her own fisheries and no treaty could be made in regard to them without her consent.

Give Fish Chance. In regard to the salmon fish-

eries Mr. Babcock said he was not concerned with the commercial aspect of the case. All he wanted was to give the fish a chance to propagate and hold their own. At present they did not get a chance. At the present rate the salmon would soon be only a curiosity. He was in full agreement with the findings of the report of the commission under Sandford Evans, but in spite of that report nothing had been done to conserve the fish, but matters had gone from bad to worse.

Larger Catch.

True, said Mr. Babcock, there had been a larger catch last year than ever before, but that was only because the canners wer now using the pinks and the chums, both of which were excellent fish but which in former years they would not pack.

Many Eggs.

Mr. Babcock told that while a single salmon would lay perhaps ent system was absolutely wrong. six thousand eggs the eventual average production that survived was but two. There were so many dangers attending the young salmon that it was aboslutely necessary that a large number of eggs be laid in order that there might be enough young to keep the species alive. Not only was man's toll large but that of birds and beasts and fishes must be added. In the natural state there were enough to keep the balance, but man's depredations had been added with fatal effect.

To Protect Fish.

been in force were recommended for as good for five years only. The which flows north and drains into five years had expired and con- ins ditions had changed. The catch now was 75 per cent. greater than east of the Skeena River, and will be used the stream would stand. While as Lot 839, Range 5, Coast District. many felt bitterly in regard to boat rating, its object was to pro- this notice and an teet the fish.

Local Protests.

Caffery and others pointed out to ment Buildings, Victoria, B. C., within Mr. Babcock that while the river thirty days after the first appearance of this notice in a local newspaper. was right at hand here and should be one of the natural resources

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of the city and district, all the benefit from its nearness was lost because of the fact that the fishing interests had their headquarters in Victoria and Vancouver and they purchased all supplies in the south and carried away the fish at the end of the season. The result was that it was of no advantage to this city whatever.

Scientific Viewpoint. Mr. Babcock replied that the political and industrial aspect of the case was one for the minister to decide. He had to do only with propagation and protection of the fish. He was interested only from the scientific point of view. It was his opinion that there was little money in the fishing for anybody.

Made \$50,000. Mr. Nickerson spoke of one firm that had made \$50,000 on the pack last year. He contended that under existing conditions Prince Rupert was not getting a square deal. He recommended that while the fish should be protected they should be allowed to use motor boats, that seining should be abolished and that there should be no restrictions on the number of canneries. The pres-

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