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STATEMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Report of the State Fish Commission.

The Oregon fish commissioners—Messrs. F. C. Reed, R. C. Campbell and E. P. Thompson—have completed their second annual report, and submitted it to Gov. Penney. The principal points of interest in the report will be embodied in Gov. Penney's biennial message to the state legislature. From a copy of the commissioners' report the following extracts are taken:

The past season has been a fairly successful one on the Columbia river, both to fishermen and packers. The price of fresh salmon was somewhat higher than in former years, but the market for canned salmon was also better, and, under these circumstances, twenty-nine of the forty canneries on the river started up during the first part of April and continued to run until the first of August, when all closed in accordance with the law. Each year since the supply of salmon began to decrease there has been a variance between the fishermen and packers in regard to fixing the price to be paid for salmon on the rivers. While this is beyond the control of the commission, or even the state, we believe if the latter will make sufficient appropriation each year for the support of a few hatching stations, the supply of salmon can thereby be increased to such an extent that fishermen can make better wages at lower prices, and so the cost to the consumers of this valuable food can be greatly reduced. To bear us out in this we will compare the prices paid to fishermen and received by packers during the seasons of 1879 and 1880, with the prices received by each during the past season of 1888. In 1879 and 1880 the fishermen received 50 cents and 60 cents each for salmon and all of them made good wages. The packers received from \$4.25 to \$4.75 per case, and at these figures made a fair profit on the investment.

During the past season fishermen received \$1 and \$1.25 each for salmon, and at these extremely high prices received very poor compensation for their labor. The packers received from \$6.25 to \$8.80 per case, and at these fabulous prices did not make 4 per cent. per annum on their investment. The difference in cost between 1879 and 1880 and 1888 is increased more than 4 cents per pound; this, on an average pack of 400,000 cases, amounts to the enormous sum of \$768,000 to the consumers, while neither fishermen nor packers are benefited by it.

There are serious difficulties to contend with in enforcing the present law, but the greater part of the packers and fishermen are fully aware of the fact that the salmon industry of the state needs protection, and have observed the law very well the past season. The few that were disposed to violate the law were watched as closely as they could well be, considering the large field in which they have to operate and our limited means of dealing with them. We had the sheriffs of the different counties along the rivers appoint deputies to look after and arrest all violators; we also hired steamers and patroled the river ourselves several Saturday nights during the season, and made one or two trips a month up the river, besides going whenever and wherever we could hear a word of complaint about the law being violated. We give the officers of Washington territory due credit for the able manner in which they assisted in this matter.

The commissioners then give in detail the number of instances when the law had been violated, and the penalties imposed in cases where the guilt of the parties were established.

As mentioned in our last report, Washington territory in 1881 repealed that part of her law making September a close month, so that as the statutes now stand, it is lawful to fish for salmon in Washington territory during the month of September, and unlawful in Oregon. This makes it difficult to enforce that part of the law; yet we succeeded in doing so this season far better than we anticipated, the only place where an arrest was made being at Celilo.

In our last report under this topic, we stated that the wording of the present law was insufficient to make it operative in all its parts, and at the proper time we would recommend some changes. As the legislature meets this coming winter, we would call your attention to some of these points, and also suggest further necessary and protection legislation.

The law says "it shall be unlawful to take or fish for salmon," etc., but in the clause creating the penalty, it omits a part of the above, and makes a person liable to a fine for catching salmon only at times forbidden by law.

The law does not prohibit persons from having salmon in their possession during the close times; consequently any one can possess salmon on Sundays, or during the close months of March, August and September, and all that is necessary for them to do is to swear that they were not caught during the close time.

The law does not prohibit the common carriers in the state from receiving and transporting fresh salmon during the close times; if it did so the law could be more easily enforced.

Again, the different kinds of fish commonly called salmon are not named. No one seems to know if a steelhead, blueback or silverside is a salmon under the law or not. A person may catch any of these varieties during the close times and claim they are not salmon. The courts then must decide if they are or not, and somebody must pay the costs, which is usually no small item in such cases.

It seems to be the general impression that the fine of \$500 or one year in jail in the present law is excessive.

That portion of the present law regulating the size of meshes for gill-nets and seines, and the distances apart for slats on weirs or fish traps, was evidently framed to protect the small fish. It is the general belief that all, or nearly all, of the salmon, both large and small, which go up the river die near their spawning grounds. However, it may be well to protect the small ones, as they are of no commercial value; but this could be done as well, or better, by stating the minimum size of each variety to be taken, and all under this size to be returned to water alive, with a severe penalty for killing.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The section of the present law forbidding the throwing of sawdust into the Columbia river or its tributaries is almost useless as it now stands, as it only takes effect below the cascades of the Columbia and the falls of the Willamette, and by some considered unconstitutional.

To remedy this we would recommend that the law be made general throughout the state, and sawdust dumped on land liable to overflow during high water period, must be secured in such a manner as to prevent its washing into the river.

Many salmon are taken from the streams of this state and sent to our markets or canneries after their bright silver sides have turned to a dull gray or almost black, and their red flesh has become nearly white, as always occurs when they near their spawning time. This is a pernicious practice, as the salmon is really unfit for food when it reaches that stage, as any food animal when it reaches its parturient state. To remedy this we recommend prohibiting the catching of any variety of salmon from or near their known spawning grounds for any purpose whatever, except for artificial propagation.

While we are making suggestions as to laws that should be passed to prevent the royal salmon from being caught and exterminated from our rivers by the devices of man, let us not forget that they have other mortal enemies all along our coasts and in all our rivers. The first perhaps greatest of these are the seals and sea lions. They begin to prey upon the salmon in the ocean and follow them into and up all our streams. Hundreds of seals can be seen in the month of July at the dalles of the Columbia river, a distance of 200 miles from its mouth. It has been estimated after careful obser-

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