

Northwest tribes band together in steelhead fight

by Dick Johnston
(Reprinted with the permission of The Oregonian)

Northwest Indians are ready for the latest skirmish in their long battle to retain the fishing rights guaranteed them by treaties, Indian leaders said in Washington, D.C. Friday.

At issue is a bill before Congress that would decommercialize steelhead trout. The legislation, which would affect 25 Northwest tribes, received a second hearing Monday before the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs.

"When they talk about decommercializing, it doesn't only affect commercial rights. It affects two other uses we have — ceremonial and subsistence," maintained Nelson Wallulatum.

Warm Springs is among a dozen tribes invited to send spokesmen to the hearings.

The legislation, sponsored by Republican Senator Slade Gorton and other members of the Washington congressional delegation, would extend state laws governing steelhead to Indians both on and off reservations, making steelhead a game fish only.

Indians see the proposal as an abrogation of the treaties their tribes signed with the federal government in the mid-1850's. Those treaties, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court, reserved for Indians the right to harvest half the available salmon and steelhead in Northwest streams.

Treaty tribes have been fighting for their fish for most

of the century, going frequently to the Supreme Court, which decided its first Northwest Indian fishing case in 1905.

Under the proposed legislation, Indians would be compensated for their loss through adjudication before the U.S. Court of Claims.

The bill also provides for replacement of the lost steelhead by enhanced hatchery programs for salmon.

"That's what they said with our five-year plan," said Kathryn Brigham, a Umatilla from Cascade Locks.

She was referring to an agreement, which expires next February, under which Columbia River treaty Indians agreed to take fewer fish during some salmon runs in exchange for a guarantee of 300,000 more salmon in other seasons.

"That hasn't been met once in the five-year time," Ms. Brigham complained.

Tim Wapato, a member of the Inter-tribal Fish Commission from Colville, Wash., said as many as 500 Indians fish commercially, while many others catch steelhead for their own food or for use in religious ceremonies.

He contended that the Washington sponsors of the bill have been pressured by "special interests" to make steelhead a game fish.

Wallulatum said spring chinook are coming under the same attack.

Compensation, he said, would be unsatisfactory. "We wouldn't accept any," he added, pointing out that steelhead have a religious significance for many

Northwest Indians and that paying them to cease fishing would be like paying Catholics to abandon the use of wine at Mass.

The bill says steelhead are of "substantially greater" value to the economy as a game fish than as a commercial fish.

"We don't put a dollar value on our resources," retorted Guy McMinds of Quinault, Washington. "There are cultural and social values that are immeasurable."

The Reagan administration will oppose the Gorton Bill. Kenneth L. Smith, a Reagan appointee to the position of Assistant Secretary of the Interior Department for Indian Affairs, is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Another letter to the editor

No response to jail concerns

To the men and women with power,

I don't know who to address with the problem. Maybe I should get a hold of some people who can do something about the many problems with this tribal jail.

I think that it's a long overdue problem that needs at least a discussion. I don't know if there's anything at all being done because I don't hear much from these walls.

I've been in here for three months now and I've already changed. I mean that this so-called jail really put a new head on me, and my ways have changed. To the good or the bad, I just couldn't say. But I'll find out soon.

I don't know how many people read the letter I wrote a few months ago (Tribal jail really stinks), but I know that I didn't reach the right people.

There must be a million things wrong with this jail... There's absolutely no exercise program of any sort. There's hardly any room in the cell to properly exercise and it's a very rare occasion when we're allowed out of our cells. Some people care about their bodies. Obviously the jailors have no consideration or any type of feelings towards the prisoner's

pride in himself.

I feel that most of the jailors here are out to break a man or woman's pride. I'll tell you one thing—the federal prisoners get far more privileges than other prisoners that are locked up here. I don't say nothing about it because my pride is still untouched by this system, if you can call it that.

Is it humane to keep a prisoner isolated for about two months? I was in solitary confinement for one month. Now I'm in a juvenile cell until the federal prisoner goes back to where ever he came from. If I'm not out soon I think I'll give in to insanity.

The problem with your jail is that it's run like a prison. There's no type of counseling. There's no type of ways to let out your aggression unless you pound the walls. The way I feel right now, I feel that I'd much rather be in prison.

Well, I know that most of you well respected citizens have better things to do than worry about such a small problem, but someday your kids may end up here. I feel sorry for those who end up on this long and tiring road. I will be the death of me someday—mark my word.

Davis Stwyer

TOE NESS

There was this guy who said, "Inflation has really made me believe in reincarnation, I'm already spending my next life's savings." YIKE

SS SS SS

EXPERIENCE: "Well, this is something you get while you are looking for something else." YIKES

SS SS SS

A guy told his friend, "You are growing older when you burn the midnight oil after 9:00 p.m." YIKES

SS SS SS

CONFUCIUS SAY: "Amazing how cold cash warm girl's heart!" YIKES

SS SS SS

There was this guy who said, "I'll never forget when I lost my baby teeth—I didn't know my father could hit that hard." YIKES

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38th annual NCAI meeting nears

The National Congress of American Indians is pleased to announce its 38th Annual Convention to be held in Anchorage, Alaska, on October 11-16. The theme for this year's Convention, hosted by the Alaska Federation of Natives, is "Spirit/Sovereignty/Survival."

The Convention will feature high-level policymakers from the Reagan Administration. The Honorable Samuel Pierce, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; the Honorable Kenneth Smith, Interior Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs; the Honorable Dorcas Hardy, HHS Assistant Secretary for Human

Development Services; the Honorable James DeFrancis, Energy Assistant Secretary for External Affairs; and the Honorable Frank Ryan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Education. Mr. Morton Blackwell, Special Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, will attend pending approval by the White House Travel Office.

More than 1,000 NCAI members from throughout the United States will be in attendance to assess the Reagan policies towards Indians in nine issue areas: Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Economic Development, Education, Health, Housing,

Human Resources, Indian Preference, Natural Resources, Litigation and Trust Responsibility. The membership will review NCAI activities during the past year, evaluate performance and set priorities for the forthcoming year. Elections for NCAI officers will be held.

The NCAI, founded in 1944, is a Washington, DC-based membership organization, dedicated to securing and protecting the rights of American Indians. NCAI represents more than 150 tribal governments and monitors congressional and federal activities as they relate to Indian tribes.

Future law students should prepare

The American Indian Law Students Association is offering assistance to all Indian persons interested in applying to law school for the school year beginning in Fall of 1982. The deadline for application to many schools is quickly approaching and it is important that Indian applicants begin the process immediately.

Although the number of Indian lawyers is growing, Indian people remain underrepresented on a nationwide level, says the American Indian Law Students Association "Intelligent, dedicated and hardworking Indian people are needed to bolster the ranks of Indian lawyers who are assisting their tribes or other Indian people to achieve adequate legal representation."

Indian people interested in

law school should immediately contact AILSA and the American Indian Law Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Law Center sponsors the Special Scholarship Program in Law for American Indians. The Programs provide Indian Law students with a stipend for living expenses, while they are in law school.

the fate of the Scholarship Program is as yet undecided in the wake of present budget cutting. However for further information about the program itself and its continuance, contact the American Indian Law Center.

AILSA has six regional coordinators at various law schools around the country. These people can assist prospective law school applicants with their applications and the procedures for application. However

as all applicants are working with time restraints, and in some (if not many) cases, communication will be through the mail, we urge applicants to begin application procedures now before the deadlines are upon us.

Interested applicants should contact AILSA at the University of New Mexico and they will forward your information to the appropriate regional coordinator. Please include current mailing address and phone and school(s) you are applying to.

Further inquiries should be addressed to the American Indian Law Students Association, American Indian Law Center, 1117 Stanford, NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87131. Prospective applicants may also call Thomasine Ross, Director of the Scholarship Program, at (505) 277-5462.

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