

Inclosure 2 in No. 2.

Report of a Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, approved by his Excellency the Governor-General in Council, on the 26th December, 1892.

ON a Report, dated the 23rd December, 1892, from the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, submitting the appended communication from owners of sealing-vessels and others interested in the sealing industry, it will be observed that it was originally intended by the writers to send the communication to the High Commissioner for Canada, to whom it was addressed.

The Minister observes that the sealers refer to the restrictions which have been placed upon their industry. They describe the limited range for their occupation consequent upon the closure of Behring Sea, and express their uncertainty touching the extent to which the Asiatic waters may be used in consequence of the action of the Russian authorities during the past season entailing the loss of property and sacrifice of personal liberty.

They may, therefore, possibly be limited, in fact, to the coast catch, with, they say, the alternative of entirely abandoning the industry, which, they show, would entail the loss of capital, income, material and commercial connections to the owners, and the still more serious loss to the masters and crews and their families.

The Minister, touching the character of these memorialists, cheerfully testifies his opinion to be that they are law-abiding subjects of Her Britannic Majesty, and entitled to every reasonable consideration in the protection of their rights. They are naturally anxious to know authoritatively the views of Her Majesty's Government touching their rights, in order that they may be enabled to judge, in the approaching season, whether or not their vessels may safely be fitted out for the purpose of sealing. They desire especially to be informed within what limits they may now count upon protection.

The Committee, on the recommendation of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, who states that, in his opinion, the request is most reasonable, advise that your Excellency be moved to cable Her Majesty's Government the substance of the communication from the sealers, with the request that your Excellency be advised speedily of the opinion of Her Majesty's Government.

The Committee further advise that your Excellency be moved to forward a copy of this Minute to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government.

All which is respectfully submitted, for your Excellency's approval.

(Signed)

JOHN J. MCGEE,

Clerk of the Privy Council.

Sir,

Victoria, November 30, 1892.

The Undersigned owners of sealing schooners, and others interested in the sealing industry, have the honour to lay before you the following statement, which should, perhaps, with more propriety, be forwarded through the officials at Ottawa. The next season is, however, near at hand, and time is precious; so to avoid the inevitable delay incident to formal transmission through official channels, we have thought fit to address you direct, trusting you will not consider that we have taken an unwarrantable liberty.

We would draw your attention to the fact that not only has much capital been invested in sealing schooners, their outfits, and the machinery necessary to deal adequately with the season's catch, when it has been safely brought to port, all of which is necessarily idle and unprofitable while the existing conditions are maintained, but that a large number of men, with their families and those dependent upon their exertions, are at present deprived of any opportunity of earning their living; for the coast catch, which is all that is now open to us, without the fear of seizure of our vessels and sacrifice of our personal liberty constantly before our eyes, is too limited in extent, and uncertain in nature, to enable us, without absolutely certain loss, to fit out vessels to engage in it alone. Even at the best it can never afford subsistence to a tithe of the fleet.

We are now debarred by the terms of the *modus vivendi* from operating in Behring Sea, and recent events on the Russian side have shown that the present limits are not clearly defined. We are therefore limited to the coasts of the Province of British Columbia and Alaska up to the Behring Sea, with the one alternative of going out of the industry altogether, and all that such a step entails, the loss of capital, income, material and commercial connections to the owners, and, what is still more serious, the loss of even their daily bread to the captains and crews, not to speak of their families and dependents, who, it goes without saying, can ill afford to bear such a reverse.