

# CANADA PROTESTS U.S. CHINOOK PLAN: STOCKS AT ALL-TIME LOW

Canada has protested the United States' plan for harvesting chinook salmon off the southeast coast of Alaska, which was announced less than a week before the July 1st opening of the 1996 fishing season.

Canada is concerned that the catch limit is too high to allow the rebuilding of endangered stocks. Scientists forecast that the number of chinook returning to spawning grounds on the west coast of Vancouver Island will be at an all-time low this year, with only one or two dozen females expected to return to some streams.

Canada's Fisheries and Oceans Minister Fred Mifflin said: "Alaska is advocating limits which are clearly inconsistent with the conservation actions taken by Canada and will undoubtedly increase the harvest rate on seriously depleted stocks."

Under the 1985 Canada-U.S. Pacific Salmon Treaty, which covers six species of salmon and steelhead, the two countries are obliged to cooperate in managing stocks and preventing overfishing. Catch limits are supposed to be negotiated within the bilateral Pacific Salmon Commission established by the treaty, based on recommendations by a technical committee composed of Canadian and American scientists.

In 1994, scientists from both countries recommended that significant reductions in chinook catch limits be put in place, in view of major declines expected in runs in 1995, 1996 and 1997. They attribute the low abundance to past overfishing, breeding cycles and abnormally warm ocean temperatures that encouraged mackerel, a salmon predator, to migrate farther north than usual.

The U.S. harvesting plan for chinook, the largest and most valuable species of Pacific salmon, calls for a total catch of between 140,000 and 155,000. This is more than twice the maximum Canadian scientists recommend to allow the rebuilding of B.C. stocks. At the March meeting of the Pacific Salmon Commission, Canada proposed a limit of 60,000 for all chinook fisheries off the southeast Alaska coast.

In response to the conservation crisis, Canada has banned all commercial chinook fishing this year along the entire

British Columbia coast and all sport and Aboriginal fisheries for the species off the west coast of Vancouver Island. Canada has also announced it will cut the entire West Coast commercial salmon fishing fleet in half over the next several years by buying back licenses.

Since most B.C. chinook must pass through Alaskan waters before reaching their native streams, Canadian conservation efforts alone cannot halt the decline. About 60 per cent of those caught off southeast Alaska originate in Canadian streams, with the rest native

to waters in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

Negotiations within the Pacific Salmon Commission and directly between the Canadian and U.S. governments on a formula to share the harvest and to establish long-term fishing regimes have broken down. Canada is pressing the United States to agree to a public process that would make recommendations to resolve the impasse and re-establish the health and long-term future of the West Coast salmon fishery.

## FIRST MINISTERS *(continued from page 1)*

provinces, a longstanding priority for some provinces.

The federal government has also proposed the creation of joint bodies to administer areas having both national and provincial dimensions. Most leaders agreed in principle to create a national securities commission headquartered in Toronto. The Canadian counterpart to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, it would greatly reduce the administrative burden on companies, which now must comply with 12 different regulatory regimes. The premiers of Quebec and British Columbia, which have their own stock exchanges, have said they would not participate. Most provincial leaders also agreed on the need for an integrated food inspection agency and a central tax collection agency.

The first ministers reached unanimous agreement on completing a comprehensive environmental accord that would provide for the highest standards across the country and coordinate regulatory and assessment efforts. Under the Canadian Constitution, neither the federal nor provincial governments have explicit jurisdiction over the environment. The provinces are responsible for land use planning, natural resource management and air and water quality standards, while the federal government establishes national goals and standards, undertakes scientific research and deals with transboundary and global issues. While these roles are complementary, there is some duplication, which could be eliminated by an umbrella accord.

Fostering economic growth and creating jobs, which have been priorities for the Prime Minister and the provinces, was another focus of the meeting. The first ministers committed themselves to continue their efforts at deficit reduction, which are expected to give Canada by next year the lowest combined government deficit as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) within the Group of Seven. The Prime Minister noted that Canada's economy is more dependent on exports than that of any other western country—37 per cent of GDP depends on them—and he won agreement from most of the premiers, including Quebec's Lucien Bouchard, to take part in a trade mission to South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines in early 1997. Quebec did not participate in earlier "Team Canada" missions led by the Prime Minister to the Far East and Latin America.

The first ministers also agreed to move forward in creating a more open trading environment within Canada. An Internal Trade Agreement that took effect a year ago reduced trade barriers in a number of sectors, but work remains to be done in energy and procurement, occupational standards and dispute settlement.

During the discussions on social policy, a proposal by Saskatchewan premier Roy Romanow to concentrate resources on combatting child poverty elicited considerable interest. It calls for integrating programs at the federal, provincial and municipal levels to create a new national child benefit that would be given to all poor families.