

COMMITTEE ROOM 429,
HOUSE OF COMMONS,
April 28, 1922.

The Select Standing Committee on Marine and Fisheries met at 10 o'clock a.m., the Chairman, Mr. Duff, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN: This meeting is called to hear Mr. Irving from Vancouver.

H. BELL IRVING called and sworn.

The CHAIRMAN: Will you give us a brief statement, Mr. Irving, of what you desire to place before the Committee, and then perhaps some of the members will ask you a few questions.

Mr. DICKIE: I may explain to the Committee that Mr. Bell Irving is the biggest fish man on the British Columbia coast. He is also actively engaged in operations on the American side, so that what he has to say will be of interest and value.

Mr. IRVING: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I had no intention yesterday of coming here before this Committee, as I believed that the matter had been very thoroughly threshed out at a recent date when a delegation came from the coast, of which my son was a member. But I saw Mr. Johnston, the Deputy Minister, yesterday, and he told me that the Committee had been formed to investigate, and that it was very desirable that I should meet the gentlemen on the Committee in order to place my views before them. You will excuse me if the information I propose to give is rather disjointed, because I have not had time to put it together in systematic form. I want particularly to urge upon the members of this Committee the desirability of making a study of the report of the Sanford Commission which sat in 1917. It is the most exhaustive report on the fisheries question of British Columbia which has yet been made. The conclusions and recommendations at the end of the report are not so strong as many of us believe the acute depression of the industry demand. Still, the facts put before the public are exceedingly interesting and very reliable indeed, and I think you will find it of immense advantage to study it. I will just point out a few points which it seems to me are of great importance. On the first page it is stated: (Reads)

"In Canada the Dominion Parliament exclusively has the right of interference with the exercise of the public right to fish in tidal waters, and this right of interference is unlimited, the only recourse lying in the election by the people of a Legislature which will change objectionable laws."

So the Dominion is not in the same position as the United States. The United States Federal Government is very shy of interfering in any way with the fishery laws as these matters are attended to by the State Legislatures. I think the first and most important consideration that faces those interested in the industry and the public in Canada is the conservation of the fish supply. The second is the economic maintenance of the industry, that is, that it should be carried on in a way that will leave a margin of profit for all concerned, fisherman and everybody else, and that cheap and good food would be provided for the people of Canada as well as for export at as reasonable prices as possible. Unfortunately in the past, it seems to us, there has been a disposition to view the action of the canners as selfish and greedy. I would point out that the interests of the fishermen and the canners are closely allied necessarily. One depends on the other, and any injury to one or the other is bound to affect both.

[Mr. H. Bell Irving.]