

# Objection to Governmental Operation of Fisheries

By Mr. Henry Doyle, of Northern B.C. Fisheries, Ltd.

## Governmental Management in the Light of Experience is Costly and Inefficient—Nature's Production Must Be Increased—Restricted Operation Will Defer But Not Prevent Extermination.

The casual reader of Hon. Mr. Sloan's proposal that the Government take over and administer the salmon fisheries of British Columbia might conclude the policy advocated was wise and statesmanlike. Governmental operation of our natural resources, be they fish or otherwise, theoretically should be better and more economically administered since it eliminates competition, and does away with the unnecessary duplication of expenditure which competition engenders. But theory and practice are often diametrically opposed and nowhere is this more apparent than with our public servants. What Government managed industry in Canada can show operating costs that would compare favorably with private enterprises of a similar nature? A comparison would be equally odious as regards efficient maintenance; and no Government service offers its employees the same incentive for proving their worth as is found in any private industrial enterprise. Doubtless political influences are largely responsible for this state of affairs. Men who, in private enterprise exercise the highest type of business ability, sound in judgement, quick in decision, and leaders among their business associates, cast all these advantages aside when accepting public office. Their policy becomes weak and vacillating, their judgement is influenced by what they fear their supporters may think; decision does not abide in them; and inefficiency and lack of method, which they would never tolerate in their private affairs, becomes the guiding rule of conduct in their services for the public.

In this particular matter of the Hon. Mr. Sloan's proposal there is nothing to indicate any departure from the recognized system of governmental conduction of business affairs. For 40 odd years the Dominion Government has enacted and enforced laws for the maintenance of the salmon industry, and not only have their methods failed of success, but this failure is the very cause of Mr. Sloan's proposal. What warrant has he for expecting successful operations in the future from those whose past and present actions he so severely condemns in his memorandum of protest to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries?

Mr. Sloan intimates that should the Dominion authorities be unwilling to operate our salmon fisheries as a governmental undertaking, the Provincial Government would gladly assume the burden. But we have no more reason to expect satisfactory results from one than from the other. One of the chief provincial undertakings that had for its object the preservation of our salmon was the construction of the Seaton Lake hatchery. Even in that a grave mistake was made in locating the hatchery where it is, and despite the continued depletion of the Fraser sockeye fishery the Seaton Lake hatchery has failed to operate during many of the years since it was established. Does this indicate a special fitness on their part to now assume full charge of the industry?

There is nothing new or constructive in the line of action advocated by Mr. Sloan. All he proposes is that one operator—the Government—shall replace the many private operators; thereby decreasing production costs with a possible corresponding reduction in selling values, and that through restricted fishing the drain on the fish would not be as severe as under existing conditions. There is nothing in the whole memorandum to show the Provincial Government has any idea of building up the industry by operating hatcheries, clearing obstructions in spawning streams, and in otherwise assisting nature to increase the supply. On

the contrary Mr. Sloan expressly states "All that is necessary to maintain our salmon supply is to ensure that a sufficient number of fish reach the spawning grounds. If the beds are well seeded there will be a certain return. The fish will do all the work necessary, provided the Government gives them a chance to do so. They will perpetuate themselves without cost." This statement is not borne out by the facts; freshets and other catastrophes cause losses after the grounds have been amply seeded, and restricted fishing alone will not offset the depletions thus occasioned. Salmon are provided with the necessary quantity of eggs to maintain their place in marine life despite the depredations of their natural enemies. Commercial fishing is simply an additional cause of destruction not provided for in the original scheme of things, and the toll it exacts can only be compensated for by increasing nature's maximum production. To operate our fisheries on a restricted basis may defer, but will not prevent extermination.

While Mr. Sloan's proposal does not meet with the support or approval of those possessing a knowledge of, or experience in, the salmon fisheries, the Provincial Department of Fisheries must be credited with more accomplishments in its work than can be shown by any other department of either the Provincial or Dominion Governments. To Mr. Babcock is largely due the credit for securing the services of Dr. Gilbert, Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Stafford in the study of the life history of our fishes, and his own painstaking and energetic accomplishments entitle him to all praise. To his efforts are largely due the building of the fish ways at Quesnelle Dam and Medziaden Lake, as well as the clearing out of the Hell's Gate slides in 1913. If the Provincial Government gives him in future the same support in such matters as they have done in the past they will accomplish more toward perpetuating the salmon industry than could ever be looked for under the policy of governmental operation which Mr. Sloan proposes.

## ANNUAL STATEMENT OF BANK OF NOVA SCOTIA

The annual report of the Bank of Nova Scotia for the year ending December 31st, 1919, which is shown in another page of this issue, reflects increasing strength of this already strong, conservative institution, and exhibits the result of its absorption of the Bank of Ottawa, whose affairs were taken over last spring. At the time of the taking over of the assets of the Bank of Ottawa the two banks showed total resources of \$234,000,000, while at the end of last year these assets had increased in the combined statement to \$238,000,000.

The profits of the bank for 1919 amounted to \$1,925,478. This is in comparison with 1918, when the profits were \$1,411,925, and at the same date in 1917, \$1,295,315. After deducting dividends, which have been increased from 14 per cent. to 16 per cent., and allowing for war tax circulation of \$90,000, writing off of bank premises of \$200,000, transferred to reserve of \$200,000, and allotment to pension funds of \$100,000, there remained a balance to the credit of profit and loss of \$704,172.

The balance sheet shows some outstanding changes as compared with a year ago. The cash position of the bank is very strong, its cash holdings being equal to 23.60 per cent. of liabilities, against 25 per cent. at the end of the previous year. Assets of a readily realizable character amount to \$151,000,000, which is 74.22 per cent. of public liabilities, against 77.81 per cent. at the close of 1918. The deposits show a notable increase, totalling over \$180,000,000, as compared with \$122,000,000 last year. Current loans in Canada show an expansion to \$66,000,000, as compared with \$40,000,000 the previous year. Call loans have almost doubled those of 1918, and now stand at \$7,494,072.