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PACIFIC FISHERIES TALKS

Fisheries Minister H.J. Robichaud reported to the House of Commons on June 24 that no agreement had been reached regarding modification of the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean, though Canada, Japan and the United States were in accord that a convention between them was necessary to maintain the fisheries of the North Pacific in the interest of the fishing industries of their respective countries.

Representatives of the three countries who had been meeting in Washington, D.C., since June 6, recessed deliberations on June 21; they are to reconvene this autumn. The Convention came into force on June 12, 1953, for a 10-year period, following which it could be terminated on one year's notice by either Canada, Japan or the United States. Mr. Robichaud said that the 10-year period was over and that the recent conference in Washington had been held at the request of Japan to consider the possible need for modification of the Convention.

PROBLEMS SOLUBLE BEFORE AGREEMENT

While no agreement had yet been reached, the Minister said, the problems, including the special protection for Canada's unique salmon, halibut and herring fisheries and the conservation of the North Pacific fisheries generally, could be solved within the framework of the present Convention, and the Canadian delegation would, in the further discussions planned for later in the year, endeavour to bring this about.

The text of the report follows in part:

"The present Convention, alone among all fisheries treaties, embodies the principle of abstention. Under this principle, if one or more of the parties are exploiting a fish stock to the full and are restricting their fishing by regulations based on scientific research in order to maintain that fish stock at a productive level, the other party or parties will abstain from entering the fishery. In accordance with this principle, Japan, under the present Convention, is required to abstain from fishing the important salmon, halibut and herring stock of North American origin, and Canada abstains from fishing salmon in the Bering Sea. Our fisheries have in this way had a very large measure of protection from the expanding Japanese high-seas fishing operations. There have been some difficulties in the application of the principle of abstention, but our experts believe that no stocks which do not qualify now remain under abstention and that all stocks which qualify are under abstention. Continuation of the present Convention, including the abstention principle, is thus very important to the Pacific fisheries of Canada.

"This Convention has not been popular in Japan because it has restricted the expansion of their fisheries in the Northeastern Pacific. Early during the present negotiations, the Japanese delegation proposed a revision of the treaty to eliminate the principle of abstention, which they claim to be monopolistic and contrary to generally accepted principles of freedom of fishing on the high-seas. With this

(Over)