

PRESS BACKGROUNDER ON
SALMON AND HERRING

- This issue arose from a petition filed in April, 1986 under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act (retaliation against unfair trading practices). The complaint was that, while Canadian fish processors were buying significant quantities of unprocessed Alaskan salmon and herring, U.S. processors were denied any access to unprocessed salmon and herring from British Columbia.
- Canadian regulations under the Fisheries Act prohibit the export of Pacific sockeye and pink salmon and herring unless it has been processed in a federally certified plant in B.C. Other salmon species, such as coho, chinook and chum are not subject to these regulations.
- About 2,400 workers are engaged in processing West Coast sockeye and pink salmon (some 2,000 in canning operations and 400 in freezing salmon for export). Processing of roe herring involves about 1,200 seasonal jobs in B.C.
- The U.S. does not maintain comparable export restrictions. Although the U.S. Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (1976) includes a "processor preference", this has been applied only to control "over-the-side" sales to foreign floating processors and not to preclude the export of unprocessed fish. Roughly 15% of the salmon and 8% of the herring processed in B.C. is imported from Alaska.
- After two rounds of bilateral consultations in September and October, 1986, the USA took the complaint to a GATT Panel in March, 1987. The U.S. Section 301 investigation has been suspended pending the outcome of the GATT process.
- In November, 1987, the GATT Panel made its finding that Canada's export restrictions were inconsistent with the GATT. The Panel report has already been discussed in the GATT on two occasions (December, 1987 and February, 1988).
- Canada will be prepared to accept the report's adoption on March 22 and will remove the GATT-inconsistent measures by January 1, 1989. At the same time, new regulations will be implemented to put in place a landing requirement for all Pacific salmon and herring, as well as provisions for inspection, grading and quality control. This will provide access for U.S. purchasers and will address Canada's fishery conservation, management and quality requirements in a manner consistent with the GATT as well as with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.