



Serial No. 2238
(A. a. 4)

ICNAF Comm. Doc. 69/19

ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1969

Canadian proposal to prohibit fishing for Atlantic salmon on the high seas
in the Convention Area

The Canadian Delegation and all Canadian Atlantic salmon fishing interests continue to view with deep concern the development of commercial fisheries for Atlantic salmon on the high seas in waters of the Convention Area far from the rivers of origin. It had been our hope, when the Commission adopted a specific resolution at the last annual meeting concerning Atlantic salmon fishing that immediate action would be taken by the Contracting Governments to prevent the expansion and extension of the developing high seas fishery. Although we realize that distribution of the resolution may have been too late for certain nations to alter their 1968 fishing plans, we are very disappointed that preliminary reports received to date show that the number of vessels fishing for salmon on the high seas in the Convention Area increased, the salmon catch increased in the area and the fishery was extended to new locations during the 1968 season. These facts coupled with a significant reduction in the catch of grilse and adult salmon in the Canadian inshore fisheries in 1968 and forecasts of reduced smolt runs from certain major salmon producing rivers in Canada, have changed our feeling of concern to one of alarm.

The special requirements for effective management of anadromous fishery resources and the concomitant special interests of those nations with major freshwater spawning areas within their boundaries are well known to fisheries scientists and administrators and have been discussed and developed in recent years in several international fisheries fora. Salmon runs to Canadian rivers on all our coasts are of great economic and social importance to Canada and are utilized by subsistence, sport or commercial fisheries wherever the runs occur. Because salmon play such an important role in the Canadian fishing scene we have gathered a great deal of knowledge concerning rational utilization and effective management from the results of long-term research programs and trial and error regulation of the fisheries. The experience we have gained has made it possible for Canadian representatives to maintain a consistent

position whenever the most effective way to utilize salmon resources was under consideration.

We are convinced that through scientific study, strict regulation of the fisheries based on the scientific results and the application of positive fish culture methods, we have maintained the Canadian salmon stocks which would otherwise have disappeared long ago. Also we believe that the salmon resources can be increased by the application of scientifically-based techniques which are now emerging. The maintenance and increase of the runs, however, require not only that we continue our intensive efforts in research, regulation and culture but that we also continue, at considerable cost to the Canadian economy, the protection of our rivers from other uses which would make them unsuitable for salmon. To justify continuing these efforts and costs it is necessary to have the incentive of reserving the runs for Canadian fishermen. Otherwise the long-term prospect for maintenance of the valuable salmon resources is very poor.

The Canadian position as outlined above does not disregard the essential role played by the oceans in contributing to the growth and maturation of salmon but in this area individual nations do not develop these essential environmental conditions at a national cost. It is obvious that the burden of responsibility for maintaining maximum salmon runs falls upon the coastal states possessing suitable freshwater spawning streams.

Further, we are concerned about the development of high seas fisheries for salmon because such fisheries are generally conducted in areas where stocks from many separate rivers are intermingled. Exploitation in such an area makes it impossible to manage separate stocks in order to ensure realization of the long-term maximum yield of each stock. It is an objective of our management practice to minimize the harvesting of mixed stocks in order to permit the provision through fishery regulation of optimum escapements to individual streams and thus use the full productive capacity of each major stream. A major advantage of inshore fishing for salmon as practiced in Canada is that it is very flexible, susceptible to regulation of intensity week by week or day by day on individual spawning runs so as to make possible optimum spawning escapements.

We have the greatest confidence in the abilities of the scientists of all our nations who are working together in the ICES/ICNAF Joint Working

Group on Atlantic Salmon and are convinced that if sufficient funds could be made available, a complete picture of Atlantic salmon on the high seas - their distribution, migrations, mortality and growth - could be obtained. However, the area of concern is enormous and the cost of high seas research is very great. While we would like to see such research proceed as rapidly as we can all afford, the Canadian Delegation, on the basis of present knowledge, believes that immediate action must be taken to restrict the fisheries for Atlantic salmon to inshore waters if the resource is to be managed effectively.

The Canadian delegation proposes that the Commission recommend to the Contracting Parties that a complete prohibition against the capture of Atlantic salmon by means of nets, long-lines or other commercial fishing gear in waters outside national fishery limits be put into effect immediately in the Convention Area.