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What of the Future?

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ACTUALLY, WE WHO ARE LAYMEN, whose association with our national fishery and the world fishery may be of deep interest rather than scientific knowledge, are far from certain in which direction the wave of the future will roll. In fact, no one knows.

How many fish are there in the sea?

How many of what kind may be taken before a given fishery is depleted and perhaps ruined forever?

Are the heavy concentrations of fishing fleets converging on prime fishing grounds doing irreparable damage?

Are national conservation measures adequate?

Should there be more international cooperation to guard a resource so precious to the world?

My understanding, gained by reading a scholarly paper by the outstanding fishery expert Dr. W. M. Chapman, is that in 1965, the last year for which FAO figures were available, food from the sea was produced in the amount of a trifle over 45 million metric tons. Dr. Chapman quoted Professor Milner B. Schaefer as believing that the oceans can produce 200 million metric tons annually without recourse to fish farming or radical gear innovations.

For me as a layman, however, that does not necessarily mean all is well. And I have no evidence suggesting Professor Schaefer thinks so either. Very little gold is being mined in my home state, Alaska. The production before World War II was substantial. What is true of Alaska is true of the other gold-mining states of the United States, and increasingly of the entire world. There is much gold remaining in Alaska but it turns out that production costs are somewhat different—that is, considerably higher—than in 1933, when the present price of gold was established.

So it may be, in a sense, in the economics of fishing. Let us assume we can boost production from 45 to 200 million metric tons. The big question then remains whether this has real meaning, some meaning, or practically no

meaning insofar as economic yield is concerned. People are no more going to fish knowing it will be a losing venture than they will start gold mining knowing full well in advance they will lose money, not make it.

Leaving the future of fisheries for the moment, let me speak of Puerto Rico's fisheries. Puerto Rico has made giant strides as a fishing and fish-processing community. Much, in fact most, of this activity derives from the tuna fishery. A decade ago the importance of tuna to the Puerto Rican was negligible. Last year 64,698,000 pounds of tuna were landed here. The value, according to the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, was $9,344,000. The catch of fresh water fish has been almost constant over the years, but there has been a great stride forward in the taking of crustaceans, even though the annual value is as yet rather low.

Let me turn from Puerto Rico to Alaska. In my state the continental shelf is about the same size as the entire state of Alaska. And that isn't small. Alaska has an area of 586,000 square miles, or about 365,000,000 acres. The continental shelf matches. Few waters of the world furnish such an abundance of different species of food fish.

The fishing industry is Alaska's first private industry in order of value of production and numbers of people employed. For too long we placed almost total dependence upon the salmon fishery, which can be the richest and most productive in the whole wide world—or a complete bust. Such it was this year. The catch of salmon was the smallest in this century. Unfortunately, every area of the state was hit, and hit hard.

For example: one Eskimo from the Arctic brought down to fish in Bristol Bay went home at the close of the short season with his check for the season amounting to $1.53.

For example: a cannery in Ketchikan that put up over 200,000 cases of pink salmon in 1966 had in the same cannery in 1967 a pack of 2,500 cases.

We have dedicated and skilled scientists in Alaska, both of the state and federal governments. But we started late in the game to launch vigorous and intensive research into the life of the salmon. Much, obviously, remains to be learned. As 1967 proved, the art of forecasting what the runs of salmon may be from one year to the next is about as imperfect as my estimate of what the future may and probably will turn out to be.

In Alaska there has been a tremendous development of the king crab industry. New plants are being built; new boats are going into service. There are certain signs that overfishing may be developing. The king crab catch around Kodiak Island has been disappointing this year. There is an insatiable demand for the crab, and this most assuredly must be taken well into account by those who want crops to return in later years. Just the other day I read an article in an Alaskan newspaper claiming that some of those who had gone deeply into debt building big new boats for king crabbing were far behind in their payments.

So it is and so it has always been and so we hope it always won't be in fishing. General Motors forecasters may go off base in their estimates of car sales for the year ahead, but their margin of error is likely to be infinitesimal compared to fishing predictions.

Why then do people fish when it is all so uncertain? There are a good many reasons, I suppose. Some people were born to fishing and don't intend to quit

it no matter what the economic return. They love it; it is life. And there is always the chance of the big return, the big money, the hoped-for riches.

Rather belatedly, I remind myself that this is not a gathering dedicated to the Alaskan fishery.

Nor is it one centering exclusively on the United States fishery. Happily, it has more of an international flavor than that. And, in my opinion, this is all to the good. In the United States, fishermen and those interested in the fishery are too apt to gather and complain about our foreign competitors, about our failures in government fishery policies, and to have a right good time in doing so. I should not be surprised if a similar condition and situation did not exist in Mexico, in every Latin American country with a coastline and in fact in every maritime country. So it is that I have always had a strong belief that gatherings of this kind, even if they fail to solve every confronting problem, have a great value in promoting understanding and setting up a climate that can result, if we so will it, in making the future of the world's fishery sound and secure and enduring.

Make no mistake about it. Even if Professor Schaefer is correct in his estimate that 200 million metric tons of food fish may be taken from the seas each year, on an economic basis this is no guarantee at all that, if the market exists when that production figure is reached, man will not take it all, or more.

Man is a great exterminator. It is strange. He is possessed with intelligence and reasoning power. Yet the lion will bring down one zebra for food. If most men were at the scene, they would bring down two even if a need for food were completely lacking.

Figures can be boring. I shall recite only a few. Six decades ago 4 million tons of food fish were taken from all the oceans of the world. I have given you Dr. Chapman's quotation from the FAO of a 45 million ton catch in 1965. Ambassador Donald L. McKernan of the U.S. State Department puts it considerably higher — 60 million metric tons. Of this total Canada, Mexico and the United States take about 5 million tons. In a given year, each U.S. citizen utilizes on the average 65 pounds of fish. Of this amount, 65 percent was imported. Why?

The answer is not too difficult to discover. Take away the tuna and king crab fleets, and the fact is that the United States possesses a coastal fishery only. We rail against the Japanese and the Russians fishing for ground fish off the coast of Alaska; likewise, we are increasingly embittered about the massive foreign fleets gathered off our North Atlantic cosat. It is true that the United States possesses a very large and successful halibut fishery and takes some black cod; aside from that our bottom fishery is almost nonexistent. It was interesting to me to learn that only one Canadian vessel fishing for bottom fish is as large as the smallest Soviet vessel fishing off the British Columbian coast.

The United States, I am now told, is paying out annually $600 million to import fish from other nations. This is not especially surprising in view of the fact that somewhere between 65 and 75 percent of all fish my country consumes comes from abroad. But I really was surprised to learn that Canada is likewise a fish importer and its yearly bill for imports is $160 million.

Disregarding for the moment anything having to do with conservation, it seems to me that it is a simple, elementary truth that ours will remain primarily a coastal fishery unless and until we decide to invest the money, build the

fleet, and go out into the deep water to compete. Personally, I think that day is coming. I think giant U.S. food companies and perhaps other concentrations of capital, so anxious these days to diversify, will do that which the small fisherman cannot do. And I believe a magnet in this will be the comparatively new world opening up because of the refinement and acceptance of fish protein concentrate.

I quote now from a speech made by Dr. Chapman before the Fisheries Council of Canada in Montreal in May: "There is a need for additional animal protein production on a worldwide basis to satisfy the human dietary requirements. Animal protein is available in the ocean to more than supply the total human requirement for it. Still two-thirds of the world's population lives in nations where protein malnutrition is endemic. This factor is widely held to be the major public health problem in the world currently, and a major deterrent to social and economic development in the developing world.

"This is, essentially, the reason why the production of fish from the world ocean has grown so much more rapidly than agricultural production, and at a rate at least three times that of human population increase, over the past twenty years."

To me, and I know to ever so many of you, there is something especially inspiring about this subject. It means more than the taking of bottom fish. It means more than opening up for the United States, for one, an entirely new fishing industry. It means more than the making of money. It means first and foremost that at long last there is a food available in concentrated form that can supply protein — life-giving protein — to millions, no, scores of millions, of hungry people throughout the world. Let us not lag in our efforts and our determination to rule out the curse of hunger in a world population that expands at an almost unbelievable rate, when we have so ready at hand the means for doing so.

Man, however, is a greedy creature and sometimes one difficult to understand. You do not need proof of this but you shall have one example anyway. Certain elements of the dairy industry in the United States fought against approval of fish protein concentrate by the Food and Drug Administration and are still fighting against its development, production and distribution. This, mind you, in a world that cries out for protein, a world where dairy products and fish concentrate and every other protein resource which might be mustered would probably not suffice to feed everyone adequately.

So — what of the future?

It is difficult to discern.

What shall we do — proceed as we have been?

Shall we try to insure the future of the fishery for each nation by gradually extending our fishing zones and perhaps even the limits of our territorial seas? Some so believe. As you all know, we of the United States not long since extended our jurisdiction of the fishery zone by 9 miles. Japan has always been adamantly against a wider fishery belt than provided by a narrow territorial sea. But times change. Japan has entered into a bilateral agreement with South Korea to provide in given areas extended fishery zones not previously permitted. And over in Japan last fall I heard that the Hokaido fishermen, alarmed at the entrance of Russians into their traditional waters were demanding a 200-mile limit. A Foreign Office spokesman smiled when I talked to him about this and told me no such request from Hokaido would be honored. But times and circumstances change. Unilaterally or otherwise,

maritime nations may feel it imperative to extend their jurisdictions. Let me on a personal note quickly add that I believe there must be other and better means to attain objectives that all right-thinking men must desire.

Shall we heed the suggestions frequently being made these days that the resources of the seas, including fish, be placed under the jurisdiction of the United Nations? Without any desire at all to denigrate this world organization, which falters and stumbles even though it remains a great hope of mankind, I shall say the U.N. is not equipped to assume any such responsibility. And, frankly, I cannot at this stage in history see the coastal nations surrendering their sovereignty, a surrender which would be a requirement under this plan. No, in our time these added responsibilities will not be handed to the United Nations.

An Alaskan not so long ago made another proposal which I am inclined to believe has a bleak future. He would have "trusteeship zones" organized. He would do this by a concert of nations or, if there were no takers, by the U.S. unilaterally. A certain zone containing certain species of fish would be delineated and then the nation against which the zone abutted would put the fish in the zone up for bid, to go to the highest bidder who would be required to observe the conservation laws and regulations of the offering nation. Admittedly, the author of this proposal said, some of the offering country's nationals would be denied fishing employment in waters they formerly fished, but he thought they could be trained readily for other work and the bid offerings and subsequent taxes would outweigh, by way of accrued benefits, any losses that might be suffered.

There is another way — for all I know there may be more.

But in concluding my admittedly rather sketchy projections into the future, and please remember I am not the seventh son of a seventh son, I want to remind you of a proposal which has been pending for years.

Its author was Senator Warren G. Magnuson of Washington State, one of the senior members of the United States Senate in point of length of service and chairman of that body's Commerce Committee. Within that committee are several subcommittees. One is the Merchant Marine and Fisheries. For a good many years Senator Magnuson headed that subcommittee as well as the Commerce Committee itself. Now by reason of his appointment I am that subcommittee's chairman.

Last month at the first American Fish Exposition in Boston, Senator Magnuson was a featured speaker. There he drew attention to the fact that he was the author of a resolution adopted by the Senate several years ago calling for a World Fisheries Conference. That resolution, for whatever reasons, has never been implemented. Believing as I do that no U.S. legislator has done as much for fisheries as has Senator Magnuson, and believing further that his basic concept is sound, I hope the call for such a conference may soon be made. I think the United States should lead in this. Senator Magnuson and I are not so naive as to believe that if a conference took place all the world's fishing problems would be solved, and quickly. We know there are many obstacles in the way of even calling such a meeting. But they should be surmounted. It is imperative that they be surmounted.

International agreements can work. If they could not, there would be no fur seals in the North Pacific today. They were almost gone when Canada, Japan, Russia and the United States reached an agreement in 1911. Now the seal herd flourishes.

Similar success has not, unfortunately, been enjoyed by the International Whaling Commission. It is my personal hope, and a very strong one, that the greediness of man will be overcome and the regulations and quota limits of the Whaling Commission will be followed. The alternative is clear. If every whaling nation insists on going on its own despite international agreements, the time will come and come soon when there will be no whales left in the seas.

We fish in troubled waters. There must, there simply must, be an understanding among nations because man, unrestrained, can conceivably leave as few fish in the sea as we of the States left buffalo on the plains. The stakes are too high to procrastinate. We must act in good season. One meeting for settlement of all the vastly complex problems that would confront a world conference? Of course not. But one can lead to another, and still another, and perhaps if all goes well to sense and organization being instilled into a situation that now becomes increasingly chaotic.

One more comment and I shall have done.

There is a rush and a rash of tariff bills in the United States Congress, if not tariff bills then their equivalent in the form of import quotas. Rather rashly, and perhaps without sufficient consideration, and in an earnest desire to afford protection to U.S. fishermen, I joined a few weeks ago as a co-sponsor of a quota bill relating to groundfish. I have been thinking of this much since then. Since we as a nation catch very few bottomfish and consume much, what would be the effect of the passage of such a bill? Would it not mean two things. First, a terrific increase in prices for the consumer; second, a very real shortage of needed fish? I am inclined to believe so, and I am not inclined to believe that my countrymen would move out rapidly enough to catch the fish required to meet the demand. That would take time.

I do not say some U.S. industries do not need protection. I do not know. But I do say we should think it over very, very carefully before moving back to the high tariff days or their equivalent.

I am sorry indeed. I am sorry that even after all this time you have been listening to me the curtain of the future has not been pulled aside. I tried. But the ropes holding that curtain were too heavy.

One thing I do know, and know full well. This, then, is the message I should like to leave with you. That message is that we had better get together. We should do so for the sake of ourselves, and all others. Fishermen, and everyone else involved in the industry, are an independent lot of people in whatever nation they are found. Sometimes they are a bit selfish, too, and in that human quality they are not unique. But if the future is to be bright, if it is to glow as we would have it do, then there is a real need and even an imperative need for harmony among us all, for the long view, for action which will benefit not only us as individuals but mankind all over this uneasy globe.