

The Fisherman

EDITORIAL

November 30, 2015

CANFISCO CLOSES CANNERY - License privileges should be removed

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When Canadian Fishing Company announced that they were closing their Prince Rupert cannery operations, they forfeited any social right to their license privileges. Since licence limitation in 1967, the processing sector has been accumulating licences or quota and the number of owner-operators, especially in the seine fleet, has been vastly reduced. The Mifflin plan, as fishermen warned at the time, increased the rate of corporatization of the fleet.

Company mergers and buyouts have concentrated ownership into the hands of one salmon processor, CFC. Ownership of seine licenses and quota has increased from 12% held by all processors to around 40% held by Canfisco, alone. Corporate control is even higher; many experts estimate control of salmon licenses by financing, bartering of fishing opportunities, and quota leasing control has given Canadian Fishing Company control of 70% -80% of salmon harvests.

Fishermen and small fish buyers have complained of price fixing for years. Monopoly control of salmon production had given CFC a sense of entitlement, exemplified by their decision to throw hundreds out of work in Prince Rupert and replace them with processing arrangements in China. First roe herring popping, now salmon.

The Union believes that it is time for the new Fisheries Minister to take stock of his Department's policies which are quickly establishing corporatization and monopoly ownership of all BC fishing privileges. There will be no fair prices for fishermen and no job security for shoreworkers if vertical integration of the fisheries is continued.

We are calling on the Minister to divorce processors control over harvesting, to build a 'made in BC' version of fleet separation and owner operator policies. We are calling on the Minister to forthwith implement the policy of Adjacency to protect rural coastal communities; fish should be processed close to the area where they were caught.

CFC should not be able to direct how much fish is caught and by whom, the price that is paid, and the place that it will be processed. Control from cradle to grave must stop. The Minister has the tools to make substantive and positive change in our fishery.