

Senate Joint Resolutions

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

Be it resolved by the Senate of the Alaska Legislature, the House of Representatives concurring:

That the creation of reservations extending over the public waters of the United States, whether for the purpose of securing monopolistic fishing rights for the benefit of Indians or whites, are inimical, not only to the best interests of all the inhabitants of the Territory of Alaska, Indians as well as Whites, but also to those of the whole people of the United States.

The Alaska fisheries are among the largest in the world, many millions of dollars have been invested in them. They have added to the industrial well being of Alaska, by giving employment to thousands of fishermen, including both Whites and Indians; they have added to the food supply of the Nation, by filling the markets of trade with a food product that is at once cheap, palatable and nutritious.

Commercial fishing is carried on at advantageous points along the shores of most of the islands as well as those of the mainland. These shores are dotted with Indian villages, many of which are larger than the village of the Metlakahtlans, for whose benefit an exclusive and monopolistic fishery has been created. The inhabitants of these Indian villages belong to different tribes but the individuals of one tribe do not differ from those of another. All the Coast Indians, including the Metlakahtlans, have the same characteristics.

There is no reason why the Metlakahtlans, who were inhabitants of British Columbia at the time Alaska was purchased from Russia, should be given monopolistic fishing privileges in the water surrounding Annette Island, when similar rights are not conferred upon the Native tribes who resided in Alaska at the time of its purchase.

The Government of the United States owes no duty to a tribe of British Columbia Indians that it does not owe to the Native tribes of Alaska. Yet if the monopolistic rights conferred upon

the Metlakahtlans were also conferred upon the other tribes, with respect to the waters surrounding the various Islands and washing the shores of the mainland inhabited by them from time immemorial, the white fishermen would lose their employment and means of livelihood and be compelled to retire from the field.

These invasions of the public right of fishery are not only destructive of the rights and privileges of the Whites, but they confer no benefit upon the Indians. The Indian, like the white man, is the product of his environment. The change wrought in the environment of the Alaska Indian by the advent of the white man has transformed the roving savage into the miner, fisherman, carpenter and in many instances into the highly skilled mechanic. The development of the fisheries and mines of Alaska has brought the Indian in contact with the new and improved surroundings, and the progress he has made in the race for civilization has been measured in each locality by the extent of the change there wrought.

These rights ostensibly reserved for the Indian, do not inure to his benefit. In the case of the Annette Island reservation, a contract was made with a white cannery man under which the latter, upon making certain payments to the Bureau of Education, has been given the right to enjoy the monopolistic fishing privileges originally reserved to the Metlakahtla Indians.

These reservations destroy the use value of the fisheries so situated, that they must depend for their supply upon fish caught from the waters from which these owners are excluded and they destroy to a large extent the sale or market value of all other fisheries, wherever and however situated. In the case of the Annette Island reservation, one cannery at least was dependent to a large extent for its supply upon fish caught from these waters.

The inauguration of this new policy on the part of the Federal Government has injured the stability of the remaining Alaska fisheries not thus directly affected. These, likewise, depend for their fish supply upon the exercise of the common right of fishery, a policy that places this right in jeopardy and is such that its extension may at any time prevent its exercise in any locality, impairs the value of fisheries wherever situated. No one knows who will be the last to stand or the first to fall. The policy destroys those directly affected and menaces all others.

Therefore, be it resolved: That the President, Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of the Bureau of Fisheries, and the Congress, be, and they are hereby petitioned to take such steps as

may be necessary to restore to the people of Alaska that ancient right of fishery enjoyed by all those living under the protection of the common law since Magna Charta, by which that right was recognized and confirmed, and to that end, that all monopolistic fishing privileges, whether resulting from reservations of the public waters or otherwise, be abolished so that all may exercise this natural right upon an equal footing.

Adopted by the Senate, Apr. 16, 1917.

Adopted by the House, Apr. 30, 1917.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

The Legislature of the Territory of Alaska in session assembled herewith extends to the President of the United States, the Senate and House of Representatives its approval of the passage of the resolution "that a state of war exists" between the United States and the German empire; and we, the people of Alaska, pledge our unflinching support and signify our readiness to loyally and patriotically stand in line with the American people in maintaining the country's honor and defending the principles of civilization.

The attitude of the people of Alaska is clearly expressed in the words of our Governor, spoken upon the declaration of war.

"This is a time in the history of our country which calls for self-sacrifice and devotion to those democratic institutions and ideals that have been a beacon light to the 'oppressed of all Nations'; and now, in obedience to those principles of right and truth and justice, in the struggle now being waged between the forces of democracy and autocracy, the citizens of this great republic may be depended upon to act well their part. There should be no division of sentiment, but each and all, laying aside every consideration of partisanism, should remember that they are called upon to defend those great truths upon which this republic was founded, and should uphold and strengthen the hands of the President and his administration in the international crisis that has been forced upon the country. The time for action is here, and I am sure that the people of Alaska stand ready to do their part and to do it well. The fires of patriotism have been kindled anew, and Alaskans are ready to respond whenever duty calls."

Adopted by the Senate, Apr. 9, 1917.

Adopted by the House, Apr. 10, 1917.