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Primitive Accumulation, the B.C.
Salmon Industry and Indian Labour

by

Stephen Scott, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

August 10, 1986

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"Primitive Accumulation, the B.C. Salmon
Industry and Indian Labour"

submitted by Stephen Scott, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

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November, 1986

ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the concept of 'primitive accumulation' in the creation of the salmon fishing and canning industry in British Columbia. It is argued that the labour of the native Indian population of British Columbia and its salmon resource were transformed into labour-power and capital for use in the fledgling capitalist salmon industry. This transformation required the separation of the native Indian population from its historical means of production. It is argued that the access of Indian fishermen to the salmon resource was progressively restricted by the application of commercial and subsistence fishing regulations. As a result the native Indian population became a reserve pool of labour which the salmon canners could use to reduce the price of labour to a minimum.

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Introduction: Primitive Accumulation, the B.C. Salmon Industry and Indian Labour

Since the publication of Contact and Conflict (1977), Robin Fisher's account of European and Indian relations in British Columbia, the nature of cultural contact has been the subject of considerable debate. One issue has been the development of conflict between native peoples and Europeans in the process of culture contact. Fisher argues that cultural contact occurred in two stages, with contradictory effects upon Euro-Indian relations and the development of Indian cultures. During the fur trade period relations were amicable, mutually beneficial and native cultures flourished. With settlement, however, race relations became conflictual, competitive and native culture was severely disrupted. According to Fisher, the basis of these changing relations was economic.

The fur trade, which was economically advantageous for both parties, required mutual cooperation (Fisher, 1977:xiv-xv). European fur traders had a vested interest in the maintenance of native social organization as any disruption might interfere with the efficiency of the fur hunters. Consequently, Indian lands and resources were not interfered with and major cultural change did not occur (Fisher, 1977:42). Fisher characterizes the fur trade as period of 'non-directed culture change' in which Indians were able to freely adopt or reject aspects of European culture according to their own priorities (Fisher, 1977:47,96).

Settlement brought Europeans and Indians into conflict. Rather than cooperation and a reciprocity of interest, economic rivalry characterized the relations between the two groups. Indians and Europeans competed for the economic resources of the province, most importantly they competed for possession of land (Fisher, 1977:96).

The Europeans were no longer economically dependent upon the native people and they did not hesitate to disrupt their culture or economy when it served settlement purposes (Fisher, 1977:xiv-xv).

"Vancouver Island and British Columbia were changing from colonies of exploitation, which made use of indigenous manpower, to colonies of settlement, where the Indians became at best irrelevant, and at worst an obstacle, to the designs of the Europeans." (Fisher, 1977:96)

Changing economic priorities were reflected in changing race relations. Settlement ushered in a period of 'directed culture change' in which missionaries and agents of the state attempted to destroy crucial aspects of the native lifestyles and inculcate the natives with European values (Fisher, 1977:211). Race relations were characterized by a relationship of dominance and submission. With settlement, the Europeans, the more powerful group, were able to impose their will upon the Indians, who were unable to resist the pace of cultural change (Fisher, 1977:97). Fisher's thesis is summarized in the following:

"With the transition from the fur trade and the consolidation of settlement, the Indian had been reduced from an integral to a peripheral role in British Columbia's economy, and this development largely explains the corrosion of traditional Indian

Fisher's description of Euro-Indian race relations is problematic in a number of respects.. First, Fisher's contention that Indian people were 'irrelevant' to the economic development of the province is erroneous and tends to obscure rather than clarify the nature of race relations during the post-fur trade period. Knight (1978) has clearly documented the extensive participation of B.C. Indians in the developing capitalist economy. Between 1870 and 1890 Indian wage labour became established in every major industry in the province (Knight, 1978:78).

The persistence of native social, political and economic communities meant that for the most part, race relations took place in economic terms. Indians worked for and with whites and sold to and bought from whites. The significant difference between the fur trade and the settlement periods was that white businessmen desired a new commodity, labour power, which only the native population could produce in sufficient quantities to meet the new demand.

Second, Fisher's thesis tends to deny Indian people any autonomy in the acculturation process. In Fisher's account their actions are seen to be wholly the result of European cultural and economic dominance. There is no sense that Indian people of the time were making thoughtful and wise decisions on the basis of the alternatives that were available to them.

Third, Fisher's account fails to answer some key questions which it raises. Most importantly, if Indians were 'irrelevant' to economic development and 'peripheral' in this historical

period why did the European population feel compelled to subject them to 'directed culture change'? Fisher's analysis does not provide us with an adequate framework for analyzing the content of cultural change. It does not tell us to what ends cultural change was directed or what interests were being served in the process.

In this thesis I argue that it is exactly these sorts of questions which must be addressed if we are to understand rather than describe the process of acculturation. I also argue that these questions are best addressed by examining the role of Indian labour in the capitalist economic development of the province. Acculturation must be understood within the context of a developing economic demand for the wage labour of native peoples in British Columbia. It is within this context that we can discover to what ends cultural change was directed and what interests were being served in the process.

Capitalism, as a mode of production and as a form of social organization, did not 'appear' fully developed in British Columbia. The rise of this form of social and economic organization to dominance occurred over a period of more than one hundred years, from the arrival of the European fur traders in the 18th century to the first wave of American investment in the early 20th century. The development of capitalism in British Columbia was a long, protracted and complicated process.

Furthermore, capitalism in British Columbia did not evolve naturally out of pre-existing social and economic relations. It was essentially of foreign origin and was introduced into a

geographic area in which indigenous societies had existed for thousands of years.

The native people's modes of production and indigenous forms of social organization existed prior to, and extended after contact with the Europeans. These modes of production were not capitalist but involved various forms of subsistence fishing, hunting, gathering and domestic manufacture. The native population controlled their labour power, the labour process and the territory and natural resources of British Columbia.

Control of these factors of production by native people presented a barrier to the development of capitalism. In order for the capitalist development of British Columbia factors of production such as labour and resources had to be commodified.

This thesis explores the problem of the transition from the dominance of one mode of production to another - the commodification of labour power, and resources and the production of a wage labour force. Specifically, this thesis examines the production of an Indian wage labour force in the British Columbian salmon fishing and canning industry prior to the twentieth century. This industry was selected for study because it constituted the first large scale capitalist economic development in British Columbia. For the most part Indians were the only available labour force in the industry's infancy. Consequently, the development of this industry and an examination of the role of Indian labour presents us with the opportunity to study European/Indian economic relations during the settlement period.

It will be argued that an important factor in the creation of an Indian labour force was the regulation of the salmon industry by the State and the transformation of the the salmon resource into private property owned by capitalist interests. The confiscation of resources from the coastal Indian population through regulation, on the one hand, reduced their ability to be economically self-sufficient, and on the other hand, made the prospect of waged labour for European business interests relatively more attractive.

It will also be argued that the conflict which arose between native and European peoples occurred because native people resisted their proletarianization. They resisted the attempts of European capitalists and the fledgling capitalist state to transform their labour into wage labour and their resources into commodities.

It is important to note that Indian people were not rejecting the concept of economic development of their resources. What they rejected was the control of this development by the Europeans. Indian people desired to participate in economic development on their own terms, as owners of the salmon resource and in control their own labour. This conflicted with the requirement of European capitalists to produce the salmon resource as a commodity and accumulate capital. For this they needed to control the resource as private property and produce a large pool of cheap labour.

To summarize, this thesis argues that the root of conflictual relations during the settlement period in British

Columbia was the desire of European capitalists to create a capitalist mode of production and the resistance of the indigenous population to their proletarianization. This argument is presented through the examination of a case study - the development of the nineteenth century salmon fishing and cannery industry and the role of Indian labour in this development.

In an attempt to understand the process of primitive accumulation which was concomitant with the industrialization of salmon fishing I concentrated largely upon one region of the province and the experience of one group of Indian people. Many of the examples used to illustrate the general development of the argument are drawn from an examination of the growth of the salmon industry in northwestern British Columbia and the participation of the Tsimpshian people of the Naas and Skeena rivers. The participation and experience of the Tsimpshian is placed within the context of the general development of the industry, labour relations, and state regulation of the fishery.

The following chapter discusses the requirements of capitalist production and the means through which these requirements have been produced in other historical and cultural settings.

CHAPTER ONE: PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION AND THE CAPITALIST LABOUR MARKET

[I] PRE-CAPITALIST MODES OF PRODUCTION

To understand the development of the capitalist mode of production in British Columbia, the characteristics and requirements of capitalist production in general must be examined. This is most clearly done by contrasting and comparing the capitalist mode of production to other modes of production which have historically preceded it.

In pre-capitalist modes of production the aim of production is the creation of use-values - the immediate satisfaction of human needs. Producers labour to reproduce themselves, their families and the community within which production and reproduction take place (Marx, 1964:68). Exchange occurs only with the surplus of directly useful production. Goods available for exchange are produced on a small scale or are the accidental result of the production of surplus use-values (Marx, 1973:253). Pre-capitalist societies are largely based upon self-subsistence or 'natural economies'. There is only a minimal division of labour among producers, the link between production and consumption is not mediated by the market; production and consumption units are largely co-terminus (Terry, 1972:152).

Within pre-capitalist societies, there is no separation between the producer and the means of production. Labourers, by right, law or custom, have direct access to the means of producing their living. Originally, property is not owned privately but communally. Producers have access to resources:

first, because of their existence as members of the community, and second, because nature, as a prerequisite of their existence, is conceived of as an extension of their being and 'belongs' to them, just as their limbs are part of them and belong to them (Marx, 1964:89-90). While individual access to the means of production is mediated by membership in the community, possession of these means is a right of all community members.

"Property therefore means belonging to a tribe (community) (to have one's subjective/objective existence within it), and by means of the relationship of this community to the land, to the earth as its inorganic body, there occurs the relationship of the individual to the land, to the external primary condition of production..." (Marx, 1964:90)

In all forms of natural economy, labour-power and resources are bound together and social relations are characterized by personal dependence. Labourers are tied to particular pieces of land, to membership in particular communities, and to allegiances to particular lords or rulers.

"...in any natural economy production only goes on because both means of production and labour power are bound in one form or another. The peasant community no less than the feudal corvee farm and similar institutions maintain their economic organizations by subjecting labour power, and the most important means of production, to the rule of law and custom." (Luxemburg, 1964:369)

In pre-capitalist class societies the unity of producers and means of production requires that exploitation take some form of 'extra economic' coercion. Because the exploiter cannot intervene directly between the producer and his product to usurp surplus, a relationship of exploitation must occur indirectly, for example, through ground rent, taxes, forced labour, or tithes (Takahashi, 1952:72).

[II] THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION

Capitalist production is qualitatively different from preceding modes of production. Most importantly, the creation of value and the expanded reproduction of capital are the primary goals of production. In preceding modes of production the satisfaction of human needs is the primary motivation, in capitalism this goal is only of incidental importance.

The creation and expanded reproduction of value requires a particular organization of production. Capitalist production is characterized by the commodity form. Commodities are products of human labour which are produced in order to be exchanged and exchanged in order to realize their value (Marx, 1967:41). Through the production and exchange of commodities the capitalist accumulates value.

The central feature of capitalism, as a means of accumulating value, is that labour-power is a commodity owned by the labourer which may be sold to a capitalist (Marx, 1967:170). In fact, all the elements which enter into the capitalist production process - labour, tools, and raw materials - are commodities. Labour-power, however, is the crucial element in the accumulation of value as it possesses the unique characteristic of being the only commodity which can produce more value than is entailed in its own reproduction (Marx, 1967:193).

Labour-power is the workers capacity to labour. The value of labour-power, like the value of any other commodity, may be measured by the quantity of labour-time necessary for its

reproduction (Marx, 1967:171-173). In other words, the labour time necessary to produce the goods and services required in order to maintain the labourer fit to perform labour. If labourers can produce more goods and services, above those necessary to reproduce themselves, then surplus value is created and may be accumulated.

When labour-power becomes a commodity, the worker loses control over it. Once purchased for a period of time, capitalists are free to use it as they choose. Capitalists accumulate value through their control of the production process. The capitalist initiates the production process by purchasing the commodities, labour-power and means of production. When combined, labour-power transforms the means of production into other commodities. By a judicious combination of the original commodities, the capitalist can produce other commodities which exceed in value those consumed in the production process (Marx, 1967:186-198). Because the capitalist owns the commodities which enter into the production process, he also owns the newly created commodities which embody the surplus value of the workers. This is the source of capitalist profit and the method of capital accumulation.

In the capitalist mode of production man's basic social relationship, the productive relationship, becomes reduced to the exchange of commodities. Human needs are not satisfied directly through the production of use-value but indirectly through commodity exchange (Marx, 1967:73).

To summarize, in order for capitalist production to be undertaken, a number of preconditions must be met. In the first place, the factors of production must exist in commodity form. Most importantly, labour must exist as a commodity, since the wage-labour relationship between the worker and the capitalist forms the basis for capitalist accumulation. Other means of production, such as raw materials and the productive apparatus, must also exist as commodities, in the form of private property, available to enter the productive process. In the second place, there must exist an accumulation of capital sufficient in size to purchase the productive apparatus, raw materials and labour power required. Within the capitalist mode of production these conditions are continually reproduced (Marx, 1967:566-568). Prior to the advent of capitalism these conditions must be created.

[III] PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION AND THE CAPITALIST LABOUR MARKET

The creation of commodified factors of production out of pre-capitalist modes of production, Marx called the process of 'primitive accumulation'. It involves the destruction and dissolution of preceding relations of production (Marx, 1959:715). It is primitive in the sense that it precedes and is the precondition for capitalist production (Marx, 1939:715). It is a process in the sense that it occurs over time and is only completed when all factors of production are completely commodified (Bradby, 1975:128).

According to Marx, the basic mechanism of the process of 'primitive accumulation' is the separation of the producer from the means of production.

"The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing more than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production." (Marx, 1959:714).

As Marx notes the separation of the producer from the means of production has the effect of creating the two crucial components of capitalist production, on the one hand, free wage labourers, and on the other, private property.

For labour to become wage-labour, a commodity, the labourer must be 'free' in two senses. In the first sense, the capacity to labour must belong exclusively to the labourers themselves and they must be free to sell this capacity to whomever wishes to buy it (Marx, 1967:167). The capitalist does not obtain labour-power through direct possession of the labourer. Labour-power must be obtained through exchange (Marx, 1964:99). Ties of obligation and dependence, enforced by law or custom, in which labourers must work for particular rulers or on particular pieces of land must be eliminated.

"In other words, any direct forceful controls over the movement of the direct producers, arising from the social relations by which the ruling class extracts a surplus from them, must be eliminated." (Brenner, 1977:35).

Secondly, labourers must not only be free to sell their labour-power, they must be obliged to sell it. As Pentland

(1959:456) notes, the risks associated with entering the labour market, mean that alternatives must be systematically eliminated. This is primarily achieved by denying labourers access to land or resources. This makes them 'free' of their own means of production and obliged to sell their labour-power in order to live (Marx, 1967:169). The creation of private ownership in land and other resources is crucial for the creation of wage-labour. Direct access to the means of producing subsistence must be a privilege instead of a right. Once displaced, peasants are forced to seek wage-labour (Brewer, 1980:190).

Through the restriction of economic choice and the elimination of ties of dependence an economy based upon impersonal market forces is created. The most important characteristic of this economy is the capitalist labour market.

"...one in which the actions of workers and employers are governed and linked by impersonal considerations of immediate advantage." (Pentland, 1959:450)

[IV] COMMERCE AND PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

The problem of the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist modes of production has been the subject of intense debate among Marxist and neo-Marxist theoreticians. At question have been the methods of 'primitive accumulation'. Much of this debate has centered around the ambiguous role which commerce and merchant capital have played in effecting the dissolution of pre-capitalist modes of production. To what degree can the expansion of production for exchange transform the relations of production through which the commodities are produced? If commerce cannot

indirectly undermine pre-capitalist modes of production, what direct measures are necessary in order to create the conditions appropriate for capitalist production?

Marx argues that regardless of the mode of production, trade between societies tends to have the effect of increasing the production of surplus-products destined for exchange (Marx, 1971:326). Furthermore, external relations of exchange have the effect of transforming products within communities into commodities (Marx, 1967:87). Production for use becomes subordinated to production for exchange.

"...commerce will have more or less of a counter-effect on the communities between which it is carried on. It will subordinate production more and more to exchange-value by making luxuries and subsistence more dependent on sale than on immediate use of the products." (Marx, 1971:330)

The development of commerce leads to the continuously repeated production of surplus as the sphere of the needs of the producers (or owners of the surplus product) expands (Marx, 1973:256).

Furthermore, the greater the penetration of the money economy into economies originally based upon production for use, the more money comes to serve as a generalized means of payment beyond the sphere of the circulation of commodities (Marx, 1967:140). Payments in kind are transformed into payments in money. This also has the effect of increasing commodity production and subordinating use-value to exchange-value (Marx, 1967:121-122).

Marx argues that through these effects, merchant capital slowly transforms the pre-capitalist societies and production processes between which it mediates. However, though commodity

production may become more generalized because of the influence of commerce, the form through which these commodities are produced (the relations of production) will be determined by the characteristics of the pre-existing mode of production and may remain unchanged.

While Marx does suggest that commerce tends to slowly dissolve old relationships and organizations of production the exact mechanisms through which this may occur are unclear (Marx, 1971:330-332). The degree to which commerce may effect a dissolution of pre-capitalist modes of production depends upon the intensity of the external influence, the degree of development of domestic production and the 'solidity and internal structure' of the pre-capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1973:257; Marx, 1971:331-332; Taylor, 1979:138). Importantly, the dissolution of pre-capitalist modes of production by the effects of commerce does not necessarily mean that a mode of production based upon capitalist relations of production will develop to take its place.

"And whither this process of dissolution will lead, in other words, what new mode of production will replace the old, does not depend on commerce, but on the character of the old mode of production itself. In the ancient world the effect of commerce and the development of merchant's capital always resulted in a slave economy...However, in the modern world, it results in the capitalist mode of production. It follows therefrom that these results spring in themselves from circumstances other than the development of merchant's capital." (Marx, 1971:332)

While commodity production and exchange may be an inevitable and expanding process which engulfs pre-capitalist modes of production and incorporates them into an expanding capitalist

world system, it is not clear that it has the power to transform pre-existing relations of production. Merchant capital is only concerned with commodities after they have been produced and has no direct interest in disrupting traditional relations of production.

An increased demand for commodities may, in fact, strengthen existing or even create new forms of pre-capitalist productive relations (Laclau, 1971:30-31). For example, a ruling class may intensify the exploitation of a labouring class through existing means or independent commodity producers may begin producing for the market. In any case rather than promoting a separation of the labourer from the means of production, commerce may tend to reinforce this relationship. Lenin noted that the development of merchant capital and usury in the Russian countryside was a force which prevented the disintegration of the peasantry and as a result was a barrier to the development of capitalism (Lenin, 1956:188). Marx also noted that when the merchant buys directly from the independent producer that the form of production remains unchanged and that this creates an "...obstacle to the real capitalist mode of production..." (Marx, 1971:334).

[V] DIRECT MEANS OF PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

a) The Forceful Expropriation of Land and Resources

If commerce and commodity exchange are insufficient conditions for the dissolution of pre-capitalist modes of production and in fact may tend to reinforce the non-separation

of the labourer and the land, primitive accumulation must proceed by more direct means.

In Capital, Volume One, Chapters 27 and 28, Marx described the various legal and political measures, backed up by direct force, used to expropriate the English agricultural peasantry and drive them from their lands. Small farmers were expropriated and large tracts of land were concentrated in the hands of landed proprietors. Through the Enclosure Acts the State transformed peoples commonage into private property and usurped it. The displaced peasants were transformed into a proletariat by legislation implemented by force, regulating wages, lengthening the working day and outlawing vagabondage. Marx argues that the forceful expropriation of the peasantry from their land is the basic mechanism of primitive accumulation and that while it takes different forms in different countries the English case was the classic example of the process.

"...great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled as free and 'unattached' proletarians on the labour market." (Marx, 1957:716)

More recent examples of the use of violent and forceful methods of primitive accumulation were the use of compulsory wage labour to construct railway lines and other public works in Africa and the attempts by the French to privatize communal lands in Algeria (Arrighi, 1973:194; Bradby, 1975:146; Luxemburg, 1964:380-381).

Luxemburg also argues that force is necessary to produce capitalist factors of production. 'Natural economies' are unable to provide the requirements for capitalist accumulation - markets, supplies of means of production, and wage labourers -

through commodity exchange alone. There is insufficient demand for capitalist commodities in economies based primarily upon the production of use-value (Luxemburg, 1964:386). Furthermore, according to Luxemburg (1964:370), the "entire social structure and the forms of ownership", preclude the production of those resources that capitalism requires. The disintegration of natural economies through trade is a slow process. Capitalism simply cannot wait for capitalist factors of production to be thrown into the market. Quicker, more direct methods must be employed.

"Force is the only solution open to capital; the accumulation of capital, seen as an historic process, employs force as a permanent weapon...The method of violence, then, is the immediate consequence of the clash between capitalism and the organizations of a natural economy which would restrict accumulation." (Luxemburg, 1964:371).

This force is directed, in the first place, towards the traditional communities of the producers which protect and defend their forms of social organization and economic resources (Luxemburg, 1964:370).

Pierre-Phillipe Rey suggests that every process of 'primitive accumulation' must involve class struggle. Rey argues that in general violence is necessary to initiate the sale of labour-power as a commodity because of the inherent 'economic bondage' of the free wage labourer in capitalist production. Indigenous commodity and subsistence producers will not freely give up their independence by voluntarily entering the labour-market. Therefore they must be coerced (Bradby, 1975:145). Ruling classes will struggle to protect their right to

expropriate through pre-capitalist relations of production. Rey argues that:

"This economic revolution must be even more violent than was the original birth of capitalism from feudalism, since it will take place against the wishes and interests of pre-capitalist ruling classes."
(Bradby, 1975:147)

b) Non-forceful Means of Primitive Accumulation

Bradby (1975) in contradistinction to both Luxemburg and P.P. Rey argues against the necessity of violence. She argues that capital's needs are met pragmatically, through whatever methods are required. If commodity exchange can produce labour-power and raw materials then they will be acquired in that fashion. Force is used "...where commodity exchange is not a feasible way of procuring them", or when the indigenous producers will not exchange on the terms offered by capital (Bradby, 1975:140-141). However,

"...the use of force arises out of concrete needs in different branches of capitalism at different times, and not out of any permanent necessity." (Bradby, 1975:141)

Furthermore, Bradby argues that the natural superiority of capitalist methods of production render the use of violence unnecessary. The greater productivity of the capitalist production process permits capital to pay higher wages for labour-power than the equivalent amount of goods and services a labourer could obtain by working in the traditional sector. As well, the more efficient methods of capitalist production drive efficient indigenous producers out of business and into the labour market (Bradby, 1975:150). Through these means, a labour

force is created without violence in the competition between more and less sophisticated production processes.

The importance of Bradby's rejection of the necessity of violence is that it leads her to seek the reason for the use of alternative means of achieving the same capitalist ends. Bradby locates the source of these differences in the "...different internal conditions in the pre-capitalist modes that capitalism comes in contact with" (Bradby, 1975:141). This represents a theoretical advance over Luxemburg's conception of all pre-capitalist modes as undifferentiated external markets for capitalism.

c) Attraction and Compulsion - The Labourers Alternatives

Bradby's rejection of force as a necessary component of primitive accumulation and the noted limitations of ~~trade~~ suggests that we must consider other alternatives in the creation of a wage labour force. A recognition of pre-capitalist modes of production allows us and compels us to examine the problem of transition from the point of view of the producers themselves. We must consider the alternatives that face the producers and the choices they must make.

As Brenner (1977:35) points out, there is always a trade-off between compulsion and attraction. In the creation of a wage labour force either the advantages of wage labour must outweigh subsistence production or peasants must be forcibly ejected. From the point of view of the producers, their willingness to participate in the capitalist economic sector and consequently

the supply of wage labour, depends upon the relative advantages to them of subsistence, independent commodity production or wage labour. These three alternatives become part of a strategy of 'maximization in the concrete', in which producers attempt to achieve and maintain an 'acceptable' living standard (Chevalier, 1982:121). Given appropriate circumstances, the relative attractiveness of wage labour may explain the apparent eagerness of some populations to enter into the labour market.

Arrighi defines primitive accumulation in such a way that it incorporates the idea that producers may 'voluntarily' enter the capitalist sector.

"Broadly, speaking 'primary accumulation' can be defined as a process in which nonmarket mechanisms predominate and through which the gap between productivity in the capitalist sector and productivity in the noncapitalist sector is widened. The process is completed when the gap is so wide that producers in the latter sector are prepared to sell their labour-time 'spontaneously' at whatever wage rate is consistent with steady accumulation in the capitalist sector." (Arrighi, 1973:214).

It is important to note that Arrighi is not arguing that the alternative of entering the labour market is necessarily 'freely' chosen or that the relative advantages of capitalist production are naturally created. The relative advantages in the capitalist sector - high wages, technological sophistication and high productivity - are enhanced by measures which decrease productivity in the non-capitalist sector.

In the case of Africa, a combination of measures were introduced in order to eliminate the labour shortage, including forced labour and taxation. However, the most effective measures were those which increased the 'effort-price' of production in

the indigenous sector - especially through the expropriation of land (Arrighi, 1973:194-195).

[VI] THE ARTICULATION OF MODES OF PRODUCTION

P.P. Rey has further modified the notion of primitive accumulation by introducing the concept of the articulation of modes of production. He argues that pre-capitalist modes of production may not be immediately destroyed following contact with capitalism, but rather, that the two different modes of production may co-exist in relations of contradiction (Foster-Carter, 1978:56). For Rey this uneasy co-existence is defined by class interests within the modes of production:

"...the articulation of two modes of production, one of which establishes its domination over the other...not as a static given, but as a process, that is to say a combat between the two modes of production, with the confrontations and alliances which such a combat implies: confrontations and alliances essentially between the classes which these modes of production define." (Rey in Foster-Carter, 1978:56)

This relation of co-existence/contradiction is necessary for two reasons. First, a transition period is necessary because capitalist development and primitive accumulation are processes which occur over time. Factors of capitalist production can only occur gradually, and the pre-capitalist mode of production while being undermined has not yet been destroyed (Lenin, 1956:193). Second, the co-existence of modes of production is necessary because initially capitalism cannot produce the factor of production necessary for its own reproduction. These must be supplied by the pre-existing mode of production.

"Capitalism can never immediately and totally eliminate the preceding mode of production, nor above all the relations of exploitation which characterize these modes of production. On the contrary, during an entire period it must reinforce these relations of exploitation, since it is only this development which permits its own provisioning with goods coming from these modes of production, or with men driven from these modes of production and therefore compelled to sell their labour power to capitalism in order to survive." (Rey in Foster-Carter, 1978:59)

Rey sees articulation as a three stage process of transition. In the first stage, merchant capital and commerce reinforce the pre-existing mode of production and its relations of production as capitalism at the center acquires raw materials, produced in the periphery, through exchange.

Second, and this is the stage of true articulation, capitalist relations of production are introduced into the periphery through the direct investment of capital, in order to produce raw materials directly. At this stage the capitalist mode of production is dominant, however the pre-capitalist mode of production cannot be totally destroyed because it must supply labour-power to the capitalist mode (Bradby, 1975:147-148).

A semi-proletarianized labour force is created in which a large part of the subsistence needs of workers are produced in the pre-capitalist sector, either by the workers themselves or by their families. This allows capitalists to pay wages below that level necessary to reproduce the labour force and results in the exploitation of both labourers and their kin groups (Meillassoux, 1972:102).

Low wages and insecurity of employment in the capitalist sector encourage wage-earners to maintain their ties to their

traditional communities in which they can look for support in times of unemployment, old age, illness, and hunger. Arrighi describes the articulation of two modes of production in Africa:

"...wage workers continued to rely on the tribal economy for the support of their families, and of themselves during their old age, sickness, and unemployment. Participation in the labour market thus left the worker's obligations and duties to his rural kinsmen and his general involvement in the tribal social system unchanged so as to retain his cultivation rights and to be able to claim support and succor when necessary." (Arrighi, 1973:216)

The maintenance of a traditional mode of production is particularly important where conditions make it difficult to produce a fully capitalist labour market. Pentland (1959:456) notes that a staples export economy based upon seasonal production and cyclical development, is particularly unfavourable for the development of a capitalist labour market because the uncertainty of employment opportunities makes labourers wary of entering the market. The indigenous economy is important both to the capitalist enterprise because it ensures a readily available source of labour-power and also to the worker as a haven from the vagaries of a capitalist labour market.

In the last stage the capitalist mode of production has developed to the point where necessary supplies of raw materials and labour-power are produced within the capitalist sector in the normal course of capitalist accumulation. At this point the preservation of pre-capitalist modes of production is unnecessary for capitalist reproduction and they are destroyed.

[VII] CONCLUSION

The logic of capitalist accumulation means that capitalism must expand and attempt to create commodified factors of production throughout the world and hence:

"...capitalism has as its final goal the destruction at every point on the globe of antecedent modes of production and relations of production, in order to substitute for them its own mode of production and its own relations of production." (Rey in Foster-Carter, 1978:58)

However, the theoretical debates surrounding the methods of 'primitive accumulation' have identified no historically invariable laws governing this process. In fact, the greatest benefit of the debate has been to reveal that the process of creating the capitalist mode of production in areas dominated by pre-capitalist modes of production has varied according to historical and locational specificity. We must reject the idea that the transition to capitalism must occur in exactly the same way in each and every case!

Rey and Bradby have argued that the apparent variations in this process in terms of speed and methods of transition arise out of the variant structures of pre-capitalist modes of production, specifically, the way in which relations of production and exploitation control labour-power and resources. Indigenous producers resist their proletarianization and indigenous ruling classes attempt to protect their prerogatives. The logic of capital accumulation is modified through the struggle to overcome the obstacles presented by pre-capitalist modes of production. Capitalists are pragmatic and use whatever methods are necessary or convenient in order to acquire labourers and raw materials. Indigenous producers are equally pragmatic

and use whatever strategies and methods of resistance help them to maintain control of their resources.

While there are no blueprints for the creation of capitalist relations of production, Marx and others have identified a central mechanism in its creation, the process of 'primitive accumulation'. The essential problem in any process of primitive accumulation is the creation of labour-power and means of production as commodities in an area in which a pre-existing indigenous population lives and produces. In the case of British Columbia, the salmon fishing and canning industry developed along the coast and upon the rivers occupied by a large indigenous population.

In northwestern British Columbia the salmon fishing and canning industry came to be located around the mouths of the Naas and Skeena rivers and along the Tsimpshian Peninsula. This territory was occupied by and the resources it contained were controlled by the Tsimpshian people.

The Tsimpshian speaking people lived in the Naas and Skeena river valleys, and on the coast and outlying islands between Portland Canal to the north and Douglas Channel to the south. The Tsimpshian shared the territories and waters of the northwest coast of British Columbia with the Tlingit who are their northern neighbours and the Haida who occupy the Queen Charlotte Islands to the west.

Three culturally related groups speak distinct but mutually intelligible dialects of Tsimpshian. They are the Niska of the

Naas river, the Gitksan of the Upper Skeena and the Coast Tsimpshian residing on the coast and lower Skeena.

By the time the salmon fishing industry began to be established on the northwest coast the traditional economy of the Tsimpshian had already been substantially altered by contact with mercantile capitalism. The Tsimpshian had been involved in the fur trade since Cook's voyage in 1778, and the Hudson Bay Company established Fort Simpson in their midst in 1832. The Tsimpshian had long been involved as middlemen in trade with their neighbours and the fur trade offered Tsimpshian chiefs such as Legaic the opportunity to expand their networks (Garfield, 1939:183). Furthermore, as Fisher (1977) and McDonald (1979) have documented the fur trade, construction and freighting industries provided some wage labour opportunities for the Tsimpshian even before the establishment of the fishing industry.

However wage labour and other employment opportunities were sporadic and transitory and for the most part traditional economic activities formed the basis for subsistence prior to and after the coming of the fishing industry. The most important part of this traditional economy was the capture and preservation of salmon. The salmon was the staple food of the Tsimpshian people. It was captured beginning in the spring, through the summer and into the early fall, and dried and stored for consumption during the winter (Boas, 1970:399,404,405). Boas (1970:399) noted that starvation amongst the Tsimpshian was reported to have occurred frequently late in the winter when the stores of dried salmon were depleted. Department of Fisheries.

officials estimated that between 20,000 and 30,000 fish were taken in pre-contact times for food on the Skeena (McDonald, 1985:24).

Prior to Confederation, competition from commercial interests and the application of Dominion fishing regulations, rights of access to the salmon resource were controlled by the Tsimpshian according to a sophisticated social structure which they had developed over thousands of years (McDonald, 1985:50-51). The most significant social unit of Tsimshian society was that group of people directly related to one another by blood through their mothers (Garfield, 1939:174). They worked and feasted together and lived in close proximity to one another. These large matrilineages, were corporate units, the unit of ownership in Tsimpshian society (Halpin, n.d.:52; Garfield, 1966:22). Lineage possessions were acquired through long generations of occupation and use and legitimated through public ceremony (Garfield, 1939:280). A strong sense of property rights prevailed and was respected, for the most part by the Tsimpshian and their neighbours. Tsimpshian lineages possessed rights to house and camping sites, fishing, hunting and berry-picking sites, off shore fish banks, valleys and hunting territories (Darling, 1955:10). As Darling (1955:60) notes the Tsimpshian system of land tenure was very hardy and was respected by the Tsimpshian throughout the contact period even in the face of depopulation through disease and epidemic and encroachment upon their resources by Europeans.

The problem facing the capitalist salmon industry was how to gain control of the resources controlled within the pre-existing indigenous societies. In other historical and cultural situations the satisfaction of capitalist demands for labour-power and resources have been met through a combination of coercion and seduction. Measures have been taken to push labourers out of traditional relations of production and into the capitalist labour force and other factors created by capitalist production have attracted labourers causing them to participate more or less 'voluntarily'

As outlined above underlying such 'push and pull' factors are usually measures which dissolve or destroy previously existing relations of production. The production of a 'free' wage labour force has entailed the separation of indigenous producers from their means of production. The past practise of 'primitive accumulation' suggests that we examine the ways in which the access of Indian people to their salmon resource was restricted over time. As other historical examples have shown this usually involves the creation of the resource as private property and the transference of ownership rights from indigenous producers and elites to capitalists. After Confederation the salmon resource became regulated by the State and access to the means of production became a privilege conferred by the State rather than a right of citizenship. Therefore in the case of the B.C. salmon industry we must examine the role that the State played in regulating access to the salmon resource.

As well measures are often introduced which give relative advantages to methods of capitalist production over indigenous methods of production. As Arrighi's work on the development of capitalism in Africa has shown, the introduction of measures by the State which reduce the efficiency of indigenous methods of production is one indirect measure which has been especially important in 'encouraging' indigenous producers to enter the capitalist labour market.

It is also important to recognize that the process of 'primitive accumulation' involves not only the destruction of pre-existing relations of production but also the creation of new relations of production. Indian labour had to be molded and shaped into the type of labour force which the fledgling salmon industry demanded. Therefore we must examine the creation of an Indian labour force within the broader context of the relations between capital and labour in the industry in general.

The general aim of 'primitive accumulation' is to transfer control over labour and resources from indigenous producers to capitalist entrepreneurs. However, as Bradby, Rey and Pentland have pointed out the complete proletarianization of indigenous producers may not be possible or desirable for the interests of capital. Historical and locational factors such as the seasonal availability of the salmon resource and cyclical markets for this commodity shaped and limited capitalist development and hence the development of a truly capitalist labour market.

The work of Rey and Bradby suggests that we examine not only the ways in which indigenous economies are destroyed by

capitalist development but also those aspects that are preserved. Knight's observation that traditional Indian communities and subsistence economies remained viable throughout the industrializing period in British Columbia suggests that, in some sense, there was an articulation of modes of production at this time.

The ability of Indian labourers to reproduce themselves in a non-capitalist mode of production shaped the wage-labour relationship. The way in which Indian labourers combined their participation in both the traditional subsistence economy and the capitalist salmon industry will be examined.

Perhaps the most important factor, neglected in many discussions of the transition problem, is the willingness of labourers to participate in the capitalist sector. The relative advantages of participation in both the indigenous subsistence economy and the capitalist sector must be considered as well as the structural constraints and class conflicts which shaped the individual choices of Indian labourers.

CHAPTER TWO: THE COMMERCIAL SALMON INDUSTRY AND THE DEMAND FOR LABOUR

INTRODUCTION

The first large scale capitalist industry to become established in British Columbia was the salmon fishing and canning industry. The development of this industry entailed the creation of capitalist relations of production on a scale previously unknown in British Columbia and within an area occupied by a large indigenous population. The initial problems facing the salmon capitalists were the creation of a labour force to work in their industry and obtaining a supply of the salmon resource large enough to meet the demand for their product. These problems were exacerbated by the rapid development of the industry and its 'boom and bust' nature.

Initially one of the greatest difficulties faced by the capitalists who controlled the industry was procuring a fishing and canning labour force. The salmon capitalists solved this problem, however, and by the end of the nineteenth century tens of thousands of men, women and children were employed in the industry, producing millions of cases of tinned salmon for export.

A crucial component of this labour force was the native Indian population of British Columbia. Initially the Indian population was a cheap and ready source of labour for the fledgling industry. Even so, the rapid expansion of the industry created a relative shortage of labour. New sources of labour were sought by the cannery and new ethnic groups entered

the labour force. While somewhat displaced by the entry of new competitors into the labour market Indian people remained a significant minority of the fishing and canning labour force.

Chapter Two documents the growing demand for labour in the salmon industry and the success of the canners in procuring the labour necessary to meet this demand. Evidence is presented which indicates that the labour shortages complained of by the canners were relative in nature. The real problem faced by the canners was that their labour was demanding more money than they were willing to pay. The canners favoured a greater supply of labour in order to reduce the cost of labour-power.

In the context of a rapidly expanding salmon industry with a great demand for labour the large indigenous Indian population presented itself as a potential solution to the problem of a relative shortage of labour and hence the problem of the price of labour.

[I] EARLY HISTORY

The commercial salmon fishing and processing industry in British Columbia originated in response to problems the Hudson's Bay Company was experiencing in maintaining the profitability of the fur trade. The cost of transportation was one of the major expenses faced by the Company. The problem was twofold, the expense of shipping provisions and trade goods from the east via Cape Horn, and the fact that the return voyage had to be made with only partially full holds (Morton, 1973:718). Governor Simpson's response was to introduce a policy of self-sufficiency and to develop resources other than fur for the export trade. As

a result of these policies the Hudson's Bay Company began to procure salmon for its own domestic use and for export.

Initially salmon was obtained from the indigenous population through barter or by hiring the services of Indian fishermen. Approximately one-third of the annual expense of the the Hudson's Bay Company's western trade was absorbed in buying fish from the Indians (McKervill, 1967:21).

Archibald McDonald, Chief factor at Fort Langley, began experimenting with ways of preserving salmon for export. In the summer of 1830, 200 barrels of salmon were pickled (McKervill, 1967:23). A market for this new commodity was developed in the Hawaiian Islands and Asia and between 1835 and 1858 three or four thousand barrels of salmon were shipped annually (Carrothers, 1941:5). The Hudson's Bay Company, by virtue of its monopoly on trading with the Indian population, claimed the exclusive right to draw fish from the Fraser River system until the late 1850's (Forrester, 1975:53).

The salmon fishery opened to commercial production during the 1860's with the expiry of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly and the successful application of canning techniques to the preservation of salmon. Even and Annadale began commercially salting salmon on the Fraser River near New Westminster in 1864 (McKervill, 1967:36). At the same time the first salmon canning plants on the north-west coast were established on the Columbia and Sacramento rivers in Washington State (Carrothers, 1941:6). This new technology was soon adopted by local entrepreneurs and British Columbia's first commercial cannery was built by

Alexander Loggie and Company, in 1870, at Annville on the Fraser (Carrothers, 1941:6).

The industry soon spread northward to take advantage of the abundant supply of salmon running up the northern rivers. In 1875 the North West Fishing Company established a cannery at Port Essington on the Skeena (later known as the Inverness cannery) and three years later the Windsor cannery was also built in the vicinity (Carrothers, 1941:6).

These early canneries proved to be commercially successful. In 1880 the two canneries on the Skeena packed almost 20,000 - 48 pound cases between them. As well, J. Cunningham, a merchant, salt cured 600 barrels of salmon at his plant on the Skeena and H.E. Croasdaile's company on the Naas cured 920 barrels in the same year. That year these four northern companies employed 54 fishermen and 100 shoremen and utilized 28 boats and 54 nets in securing their supply of salmon (Fisheries Annual Report, 1881:270-273). In that year the canneries on the Fraser and those on the northern coast and rivers packed over 60,000 cases (Fisheries Annual Report, 1881:264). One year later, Croasdaile and Company began operating the first cannery on the Naas, 12 miles from the mouth of the river and packed some 7,700 cases. In 1881, three canneries on the Skeena packed 21,000 cases between them (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:224).

Britain was the fledgling industry's most important market with 90% of the pack shipped there in 1880 (Fisheries Annual Report, 1881:264). Salmon began to become established as the "poor man's simple food luxury", a cheap source of protein for

the British working class (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:218). The 1881 Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries estimated that the demand for canned salmon in the United Kingdom alone was, "not less than 1,000 cases per day" (Fisheries Annual Report; 1882:217). Over the next two decades the B.C. industry expanded to meet this demand and to supply other markets which were developing in Eastern Canada and Australia.

[II] FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS: THE INVESTMENT OF CAPITAL AND THE EXPANSION OF CAPACITY

During the 1880's the British Columbia salmon industry grew in fits and starts. In 1883, 24 canneries were in operation in British Columbia and packed just under 200,000 cases of salmon (see Appendix A: Table One). Eight of these canneries were located in the Skeena-Naas region and contributed almost 60,000 cases to the total pack. However, just two years later the total number of operating canneries had decreased to nine and only two of the Skeena-Naas canneries were in operation. The Inverness and Cunningham canneries produced 12,900 of the 108,517 cases packed in 1885 (see Appendix A: Table Two). By 1889, 28 canneries were in operation on the rivers and coast of British Columbia and packed 414,294 cases between them. Nine of these canneries were located in the Skeena-Naas region and contributed 78,205 cases to the total pack (see Appendix A: Tables One and Two).

During the last decade of the nineteenth century the salmon canning industry grew rapidly both in numbers of canning establishments and the amount of salmon processed. By 1899, 68 canneries were in operation, more than double the number in existence at the beginning of the decade. In 1897, an exceptionally good year, for the first time over a million 48 pound cases of salmon were put up (see Appendix A: Table One). The average annual pack increased almost three-fold from just under 200,000 cases between 1880 and 1889 to nearly 550,000 cases between 1890 and 1899.

The greatest expansion of production occurred on the Fraser and central coast; meanwhile there was only a slightly slower rate of expansion in the Skeena-Naas region. In the north average annual production expanded from 50,000 cases between 1880 and 1889 to just over 100,000 cases between 1890 and 1899.

Similarly, the greatest expansion of canning capacity occurred in the south. In each year of the last decade of the nineteenth century eleven or twelve canneries were in operation on the Skeena and Naas rivers. For the province as a whole, 32 canneries were in operation in 1890, 36 in 1895 and 68 by 1899 (see Appendix A: Tables One and Two).

This expansion of industrial processing capacity was matched by investment in primary fishing operations. Department of Fisheries estimates of the aggregate value of capital equipment employed in all primary fishing operations in British Columbia are available for the period (see Appendix A: Table Three). These figures provide a good estimate of the growth of capital investment in the salmon fishery because in 1881 salmon represented over 70% of the value produced in the British Columbia fishery and by 1889 this had risen to just under 80% (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:222; 1890:261). [1]

Capital invested in the salmon fishery was principally in boats and fishing gear. In 1881 approximately \$120,000 was invested in all primary fishing operations (see Appendix A: Table Three). Capital was invested in some 375 fishing boats and 495 salmon nets (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:226-227). By 1889

1. The fur seal fishery was the second largest producer of value during this period.

capital investment in all primary fishing operations had risen by almost 500% to \$572,700 (see Appendix A: Table Three). The fishing fleet had increased to 1577 boats, and 255,795 fathoms of gill net were in use that year (Fisheries Annual Report, 1890:259). The greatest expansion, however, took place in the last decade of the nineteenth century. By 1894 over a \$1,000,000 was invested in all primary fishing operations and by 1897, the year of the salmon canning industries largest pack, capital investment in all primary fishing operations had increased tenfold from the inception of the industry in the early 1880's to \$1,166,700 (see Appendix A: Table Three). For the fishing season of 1897 the Department of Fisheries reported that 4917 boats and 608,800 fathoms of gill net were employed in the British Columbia fishery (Fisheries Annual Report, 1899:227). In this year salmon represented over 84% of the value produced in the fishery (Fisheries Annual Report, 1899:229).

The expansion of capital investment in the salmon industry, the investment in canneries, boats and gill nets necessitated a large work force to perform the labour of catching and processing the salmon. However, as Knight (1978:83) notes, determining the actual number of men and women working in the salmon industry is a difficult task as different sources provide quite different estimates.

The Department of Fisheries annual reports provide one measure of the expansion of this work force. In 1880 approximately 1412 men, women and children were employed in the salmon canning and fishing industry in British Columbia, 150 of

whom worked for the two operating establishments in the Skeena-Naas region (see Appendix A: Tables One and Two). According to Department of Fisheries returns, approximately 2455 persons were employed fishing and canning salmon by 1884; 833 in the Skeena-Naas canneries. In this same year Forrester (1975:55-57), estimates that 999 salmon nets were in use representing some 2000 men and Urquhart and Buckley (1965:396) estimate that the number of persons engaged in all primary fishing operations exceeded 3,000 (See Appendix A: Tables One, Two and Four). By 1889, estimates derived from Department of Fisheries sources indicate that over 7,000 persons were engaged as fishermen and cannerymen (see Appendix A: Table One). Forester (1975:118) estimated that at this time the average cannery required 100 to 150 people to process 1,000 48 pound cases of salmon per day and that canneries on the vicinity of the Skeena, Naas and Rivers Inlet area alone employed more than 7,000 shoreworkers and fishermen.

The Dominion Government's British Columbia Fisheries Commission of 1892 made special note of the rapid growth of employment in their report a year later:

"From the two small canneries in 1877, employing only about 100 persons, the industry has expanded to the extent that in 1891 there were over 6,500 persons employed directly by the canneries, and the number of other persons indirectly benefited correspondingly large." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:13)

Employment expanded even more rapidly in the last decade of the 19th century, due in part to the removal of restrictions on the number of fishing licenses available to the canneries. [2] A

2. Licenses were limited to 500 in the years 1880, 1890 and 1891 with each cannery having approximately 20 each (Stacey, 1982:13).

year after the removal of licensing restrictions the number of persons employed in conjunction with the salmon industry nearly doubled from 6,698 in 1892 to more than 12,000 in 1893 (See Appendix A: Table One). Stacey (1982:14) estimates that between 1891 and 1899 the number of fishermen alone increased by 550%. Department of Fisheries annual reports indicate that employment in the industry reached a peak in the last three years of the decade. The number of hands employed in connection with fishing in boats, including those curing and canning fish and excluding sailing and vessel crews, was reported to be 19,850 in 1897, 20,695 in 1898 and 18,977 in 1899 (see Appendix A: Table One). In 1900, some 5,113 boats fished for the canneries and the number of people employed in both the fishing and canning sides of the industry exceeded 20,000 (Forrester, 1975:138).

The rapid expansion of capital invested in the salmon industry created this tremendous demand for labour. The response of working people to this demand was dramatic. By the end of the last two decades of the nineteenth century over 20,000 shoreworkers and fishermen had taken up employment in the industry. However even the great influx of labourers into the industry failed to alleviate what the canners considered the greatest problem facing the industry, the shortage of labour. This had to do with the nature of the labour shortage problem. In fact the real problem for the canners was the price of labour, there was a shortage of labourers who would work for what the canners considered a profitable price.

[III] LABOUR SHORTAGES

The British Columbia salmon industry expanded within the context of the rapid industrialization of both the province and its largest external market, Great Britain. The process of industrialization created both opportunities and difficulties for capitalists investing in the salmon industry. In order to meet the demand for its product in Great Britain, Eastern Canada and Australia the salmon industry required large inputs of both capital and labour. Much of the required capital flowed into the province from external sources. British, American and Central Canadian capitalists invested heavily in the local salmon industry.[3] Meeting local labour requirements was less easily achieved and chronic labour shortages plagued the industry from its inception to well into the twentieth century.

The problem of creating a labour force in the salmon industry resulted from both internal factors, relating to the nature of the industry and its development, and external factors, relating to the economic context within which the industry developed. Internally, the industry was plagued by low productivity and over-capitalization and externally a small population base and competition from other industries restricted the size of the labour force available and willing to work in the salmon industry.[4]

The labour processes involved in catching and canning salmon were heavily labour intensive during this period and few technological innovations were introduced before the turn of the

3. For a discussion of the sources of investment capital in the initial stages of the industry see, Carrothers (1941).

4. For a discussion of the problem of overcapitalization and low productivity see, Conley (1983).

century in order to increase productivity (Stacey, 1982:3). The principal method of capturing salmon was through the use of gillnets. These nets were fished out of small, flat bottomed sail boats operated by two men, a boat puller and a net-man. The technique was to drift the nets down a stretch of the river, capturing the salmon as they headed upstream to spawn. During the height of the season each boat on the Fraser River required four fishermen as they were operated continuously during the 24 hour period. The men fished in relay, each team taking a 12 hour shift (Stacey, 1982:12; B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:87,89).

Labour productivity was only marginally improved by a few technological innovations introduced prior to the turn of the century. These innovations increased the range of the fishing fleet and reduced 'down time'. [5] They did not however reduce the demand for manpower in the fishery. Until the introduction of gasoline engines, during the early 1900's on the Fraser and not until the 1930's on the northern rivers, at least two and as many as four fishermen were needed to operate each boat. More productive fishing techniques, such as seine netting and fish traps, were outlawed for much of the early period of the fishery due to concerns that they would deplete and destroy the fish stock.

5. Hard-twined nets, introduced in 1892, were less visible and allowed fishing to be extended further into the clearer tidal waters. These nets were less apt to tangle and allowed for more fishing time. Columbia River boats, more durable and seaworthy than the river skiffs, were established on the Fraser by 1892, also extending the fishing seaward. Wooden rollers, which aided in recovering the nets, were also introduced prior to 1900 (Stacey, 1982:13-14). For a detailed discussion of technological change and productivity within the salmon industry see: Stacey (1982).

The canning labour process was also heavily labour intensive before the turn of the century. Participants in the industry at the time placed great faith in the ability of technological change to solve their labour shortage problems. For example, Fisheries Inspector Anderson anticipated that the introduction of new technology in the canning process would have the effect of "lessening the dependence upon manual labor, during the past season so severely felt" (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:218).

Productivity in this sector was increased, to some extent, by the introduction of technology which improved the efficiency of manual processes. Stacey (1982:6) argues that a 'cluster of technological innovations' were introduced into the canning industry in direct response to the acute labour shortages between 1877 and the early 1880's. However, while early productivity gains were made, the process itself continued to remain essentially labour intensive throughout the 19th century.

At the beginning of the period fish were unloaded, butchered, cleaned, sliced and packed by hand (Knight, 1978:87). The cans themselves were hand-cut out of tin and hand soldered. Weighing, inspection and manipulation of the tins through the labour process involved manual labour. One bottleneck in the process was removed early in the development of the industry with the introduction of machinery to cut out and solder the tin cans (Stacey, 1982). The soldering machine was an important piece of labour saving technology, introduced at some canneries as early as 1881 it was estimated to have decreased the cost of manufacturing tin cans by 30% (Fisheries Annual Report,

1882:202). However, one other significant manual task: washing, cleaning and slicing the fish, remained a bottleneck until the introduction of butchering machines between 1903 and 1906. As Stacey notes, the impact of technology on labour productivity before the turn of the century was marginal. The dramatic increase in the amount of salmon packed before 1900 should be attributed to "an increase in the number of producers and in the length of seasonal operations rather than technological innovation" (Stacey, 1982:4).

In response to low productivity and increasing demand for their product cannery owners made greater capital investments in manual fishing and canning processes. As a result of this type of capital investment before the turn of the century the labour problem was exacerbated. Fisheries Inspector Mowat, in his report for 1886, noted that the effect of the construction of additional canneries and the expansion of industrial canning capacity was to increase the demand for both capital and labour (Fisheries Annual Report, 1887:248).

The ability of local canners to meet the demand for their product was limited by their ability to secure and process fresh salmon. As the number of canning operations increased there was increasing competition between cannery owners to secure their share of the supply of fish. Because an individual canner's supply of the available resource was dependent upon the amount of labour he could bring to bear upon the task of producing and

processing the primary resource, labour was at a premium and the demand for it was great.[6]

In 1881 the Inspector of Fisheries reported that though salmon were plentiful on the Fraser the canneries were unable to operate at full capacity due to a shortage of labour (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:202). The Fisheries Annual Report, for that year attributed this shortage to the increased demand for labour in other industrial sectors, most importantly, local railway construction (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:202). Public works projects in both British Columbia and Washington State were perceived to be drawing labourers away from the fishing industry. In anticipation of this problem cannery agents had pre-engaged labour, however, it was reported that casual labour to meet short-falls was only obtained with great difficulty. As a result the cost of labour to the canners was increased (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:216).

Similarly, during a later period, Fisheries Guardian McNeish reported a good year for the commercial fishery but noted that more salmon could have been canned on the Naas had additional labour been available (Fisheries Annual Report, 1891:187). In 1892 labour on the Fraser was in short supply as well. The result was that canners were bidding between themselves for the less than adequate numbers of workers. Knight (1976:95) notes that canners Ladner and Even were desperate to get enough Indian fishermen and that other canneries were upping the price of labour in an effort to attract them.

6. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the supply of salmon and the demand for labour see: Conley (1983).

The seriousness of the labour problem is also attested to by the recurrent discussion of and the time devoted to this topic, in the series of Royal Commissions which investigated the British Columbia fishery. Testifying before the 1892 Royal Commission, Robert Ward, a Victoria merchant, contended that getting enough labour was the most serious obstacle to be overcome in the development of the cannery business (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:276). More than ten years later, the report of the British Columbia Fisheries Commission of 1905-1907, also listed this problem as one of the major difficulties facing the salmon industry. According to the Commission labour of all kinds was difficult to obtain. "Indian labour was hard to obtain in some years and white labour was simply not available to the extent which the expanding fishing industry required (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:104). The Commission, commenting on the effect of a shortage of labour noted that it restricted the profitability of the industry because the canneries, "were not worked up to their full capacity" (notwithstanding the abundance of fish) and "the cost of putting up a case of salmon was somewhat increased" (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:105).

On the one hand, the labour shortage problem was an absolute one. - British Columbia's small population base, just under 50,000 persons in 1881, over half of whom were native Indians, restricted the development of a labour market to service the industry. The white population was concentrated in the south western corner and the Indian population was scattered throughout the province. The canneries and fisheries, however, came to be

established at the mouths of all the major rivers up and down the north-west coast.

On the northern rivers the problem was exacerbated by the lack of a white settler population. Cannerymen McLellan and Dempster informed the 1892 British Columbia Salmon Fisheries Commission that there were no white people on the Naas and Skeena Rivers, only a few Indians and missionaries (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:283,312). John J. McDonald, a fisherman and Fisheries Guardian, reported that as a result it was more difficult to get labour in the north than in the south (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:187). White labour had to be imported into the region from the south and that required the cannerymen to pay transportation costs both ways (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:287). Dempster saw this as a long term problem and did not expect that the labour shortage problem would ever be solved in the north. In his opinion there would never be any white people in the area because of the lack of land suitable for agriculture (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:312).

Later, the 1908 Commissioners pointed out the economic effect of British Columbia's relatively small population. They argued that it had placed local cannerymen at a competitive disadvantage in relation to the cannerymen on the American north-west coast. The comparatively large population of Washington, Oregon, and California supplied a large pool of cheap labour the

Americans could draw upon (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:18).[7]

Given a relative shortage of labour and an over abundance of work, workers weighed the relative advantages of engaging in one sort of work or another. The last two decades of the nineteenth century were a period of economic boom in British Columbia's other major industries: forestry, mining and construction.[8] Economic expansion allowed workers the choice of evaluating various employment opportunities and choosing the most attractive.

Work in the salmon industry was relatively unattractive to the labouring population for a number of reasons. One major problem faced by canners attempting to induce people to work in their industry was the shortness of the season (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:142). Employment in the industry was regulated to a large extent by the supply of the natural resource. The

7. Canadian canners had been prohibited from drawing upon the American labour supply after licenses were limited in 1889. One provision restricted the issuance of fishing licenses to British subjects and though the canners used various means to evade this regulation they had complained vigorously to the 1892 Commission that it unduly restricted their ability to carry on their businesses profitably (Fisheries, 1908:103-104).

8.

Table 5

Production of Vancouver Island Coal; B.C. Canned Salmon, and B.C. Lumber, 1881-1900.

	Coal Mined	±	Salmon Canned	±	Lumber Cut	±
	(million tons)		(million cans)		(million ft.)	
1881-1890	3.9	---	2.2	---	550	---
1891-1900	10.4	167%	5.8	164%	1,227	123%

(Macdonald, 1981:371 - Table 2)

spawning runs were not continuous over the year but seasonal. The season began slowly in the early spring and while there would be some fishing and canning for three or four subsequent months there was a six to eight week peak period in June and July when millions of salmon would run up British Columbia rivers (Knight, 1978:81-82). For example, on the Skeena the sockeye run entered the estuary in early June, peaked in late July and was usually completed by mid September (Ross, 1967:25). It was during the peak period when the canneries made their pack and only then did they require thousands of fishermen and cannery workers. When the run of salmon was completed the vast majority of the workers would be thrown out of work, forced to seek employment in other industries. If the railway, public works or mining and forestry sectors were booming workers would be reluctant to leave their jobs in the spring for short term employment in the salmon industry.

The disincentive to enter the industry offered by the shortness of the season was compounded by the fluctuating size of the salmon runs. The size of the run varied from year to year, fluctuating roughly on a four year cycle. A very large run one year was followed by a slightly smaller run the next and then two poor years. This cycle was most pronounced on the Fraser while the supply was less variable and more consistent on the Skeena and Naas Rivers. The fluctuating natural supply of salmon meant that employment opportunities and incomes for fishermen could not be predicted from year to year.

For contract and shares fishermen salmon fishing was piece work. Cannery paid fishermen a set price per fish. Given both the limited size of the natural supply of salmon and the limited capacity of the canneries to process the raw fish fishermen competed against one another to catch and sell their fish. In good years, when the runs of salmon and catches were large cannery would reduce the price they paid per fish and set quotas on the number of fish they would accept. In bad years, small runs would reduce catches and incomes. The net effect of the competition between fishermen and between canneries for salmon was to reduce incomes from salmon fishing to a minimum (Conley, 1983). Low incomes proved to be a disincentive to the entry of labour into the industry and this was reflected in a chronic shortage of labour. Robert Ward, a Victoria merchant, explained the problem to the 1892 Fisheries Commission in these terms:

"We have many difficulties to contend with especially with the matter of labour. It is difficult to obtain a class of white men such as is necessary in a cannery because they will not come forward and offer themselves for the small wages for employment for such a short time; it is a fluctuating business and may terminate at any moment especially if the run of fish are not satisfactory." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:267)

While on the one hand the problem of labour shortages existed because the industry had expanded more rapidly than the supply of labour and into areas where labour was not readily available, the problem should more correctly be seen as one of relative shortages of labour. The problem of obtaining labour at the right price as opposed to obtaining labour at any price. As can be seen by the connection the canneries made between the

profitability of the industry and the labour shortage the problem was often really the price of labour.

The canners needed a large pool of labour in order to keep the price of labour as low as possible. However, low productivity and labour intensive work processes, isolated work sites, low wages, short seasons and uncertain employment and earning opportunities, served to keep the demand for labour high and restrict the size of the potential labour pool.

In response to these problems the canners sought to incorporate the large indigenous Indian population into the industry's labour pool. At the beginning of the industry Indians constituted the majority of the population of British Columbia and remained a significant minority throughout the nineteenth century. By creating a substantial army of waged labour Indian fishermen and shoreworkers the canners hoped to reduce both the shortage and price of labour.

Chapter Three describes the value of the Indian population to the canners, the ways in which the State and capitalists attempted to incorporate them into the work force and their participation in the industry.

CHAPTER THREE: INDIAN LABOUR - ONE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF LABOUR SHORTAGES

As discussed in Chapter Two the problem which the canners faced was that the price of labour in their industry was higher than they wanted to pay for it. They saw this problem as one of a shortage of labour. If more people were available to work in the canneries and fisheries then the price of labour would decrease as workers competed among themselves for employment. It was in the best interests of the canners to make the size of the industry's labour pool as large as possible, thus alleviating the relative shortage of labour.

The large native Indian population provided a potential solution to the relative labour shortage. The task was to transform and incorporate this population into a fishing and canning labour force; one which would be attached to particular canning establishments and to the industry in general. A long term solution was the creation of a capitalist labour market; one in which a surplus of labourers would mean that a cheap supply of labour was readily available at all times.

Indian labour was crucial to and uniquely suited to solving the problem. It existed as a reserve army of labour providing a pool of cheap labour power which the canners could use to regulate the supply and price of labour. The lifestyle of Indian people allowed them to adapt to those characteristics of the industry which made it difficult to attract other kinds of labour. They lived in the isolated locations where the salmon were most readily available and their production had always been regulated by the seasonal and cyclical nature of the salmon runs.

Most importantly, however, their access to other means of subsistence through fishing, hunting and gathering meant that they could accept lower wages. Businessmen and government officials of the time adopted a number of policies in order to meet the labour requirements of the industry and recognized the crucial importance of the Indian population to the success of these policies. The result was the production of a semi-proletarianized native Indian labour force.

The role of Indian fishermen was defined by the relations of production in the industry. Until the late nineteenth century Indians were predominately 'attached fishermen', fishing for wages or a share of the catch using cannery controlled fishing licences and equipment. Because Indian fishermen lacked essential means of capitalist production they were more under the control of the canners than the 'independent fishermen'. From a position of power the canners used their control over the labour of Indian fishermen to reduce the price of fish to a minimum.

Japanese immigration at the end of the nineteenth century and changes to the Fisheries Act during the 1890's allowed canners a new way of reducing the price of fish. Unrestricted licencing of fishermen and increased competition between fishermen for markets for their fish decreased the importance of the 'attached' Indian fisherman to the canners.

[I] THE VALUE OF THE INDIAN POPULATION TO THE FISHERY

In 1881 both Inspector Powell of the Department of Indian

Affairs and Inspector Anderson of the Department of Marine and Fisheries made note of the importance of Indian labour to the provincial economy. Powell commented that Indian labour was primarily responsible for the more than \$700,000 in value produced as fish, oil and fur and saw this as a measure of the "important place which the Indian fills in the labor market of the Province" (DIA Annual Report, 1882:xlvi). Anderson went so far as to say that the,

"...successful prosecution of our fisheries, and indeed of other large provincial industries at present in no small degree depends [upon Indian labour]" (Fisheries Annual Report, 1881:267).

Anderson, in his report of the following year, linked the welfare of the fishing industry to the welfare of the Indian population. He suggested that the importance of the Indian to his industry dictated that he cooperate with Indian Inspector Powell and Indian Reserve Commissioner O'Reilly.

The canners themselves were fully aware of the importance of Indian labour to their operations. Alexander Ewen argued, at the 1892 Fisheries Commission, that it was impossible to put up a large quantity of salmon in the short season without Indian labour (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:117). Marshall English, representing the Anglo-British Canning Company, with nine canneries on the Fraser and two on the Skeena, also informed the Commission that Indian labour was crucial if they were to capture

and can the salmon during the short season when it was available (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:142).[1]

The value of Indian labour was attributed to a number of factors, most importantly their skill on the water as boatmen and fishermen and their ability to learn quickly (Fisheries Annual Report, 1881:267; DIA Annual Report, 1882:154). Work discipline is another quality which also appears to have been important to employers of Indian labour at the time as Anderson notes in the Fisheries Annual Report for the year 1881:

"At present the services of all the young men among the Indians who are accessible, and who have been more or less habituated to the work, have been eagerly sought by the canners." (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:220)

This quality of 'work habituation' may explain why the Tsimpshian Indians at Duncan's Metlakatla were highly valued and preferred by those fisheries in operation (DIA Annual Report, 1882:147). Powell refers to them as superior to other Indians he has seen (DIA Annual Report, 1882:147) and their Methodist leader William Duncan claimed that through the industries he had set up and as a result of the introduction of Christianity:

"We have now no doubt of the capability of the Indian to attain a very respectable position as a workman, or his being trustworthy in places where honesty, uprightness, and attention are essential." (DIA Annual Report, 1882:146).

In the north, canners and government officials adopted various strategies to produce an accessible, work habituated Indian work force and attach it to particular canneries. As

1. Other canners, like Arthur Wadhams, of the ABC Co. and James Laidlaw, described their employment of Indian labour in philanthropic terms. Hiring Indian labour, they argued, was a charitable act, teaching them thrift, and industry and keeping them from becoming wards of the State.

early as 1880 the Department of Marine and Fisheries was encouraging the Department of Indian Affairs to become involved in producing a fisheries labour force from the ranks of the Indian population under their control. They called upon the department to, "in all practicable ways, sanction measures to develop and improve this invaluable source of labour" (Fisheries Annual Report, 1881:267). Fisheries Inspector Anderson also suggested that Indian Agents should be actively encouraging young Indian men on the coast to enter the industry during the salmon season (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:220).

One practical measure undertaken by the Department of Indian Affairs was to establish a number of Industrial Schools on the north-west coast, in order to teach the Indians 'native industries'. Emphasis was placed on teaching those trades especially useful in the fishing industry. Powell, Indian Superintendent of British Columbia, recommended that one of three such schools slated for the province be located at Metlakatla, on the Tsimpshian Peninsula, between the mouths of the Skeena and Naas Rivers (DIA Annual Report, 1888:134). North-west coast Indian agent Todd reported the next year that an industrial school was being established in his agency to provide training in such trades as coopering, carpentry, boat-building and blacksmithing (DIA Annual Report, 1889:202). During the fishing season the pupils were excused from their studies to allow them to work fishing and canning (DIA Annual Report, 1890:120; 1893:259; 1898:293).

Another solution that the northern canners adopted to ensure themselves a supply of labour was to locate their establishments near or on Indian village or camping sites (Knight, 1978:90). Henry Croasdaile erected his cannery at Stoney Creek on the Naas River. This was a traditional camping and fishing site for Tsimpshian Indians who came yearly to catch and process oolachen, a fish valued for its oil (DIA Annual Report, 1883:86-87). It is reported that eleven or twelve Nishga families moved down from Grenville to establish permanent homes at Stoney Point and find employment in Croasdaile's Cannery. Later a Mr. Gray attempted to locate the Nass River Fishing Company's salmon salting plant next to Croasdaile's establishment. However he was prohibited from doing so by O'Reilly, the Indian Reserve Commissioner, in order to prevent further preemption of reserve land in the vicinity by whites (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:209).

Similarly, Robert Cunningham established his commercial empire at Port Essington on the Skeena[2]. The Tsimpshian had used this site as a camping and fishing location prior to his preemption of their land. Cunningham set aside land in the vicinity for an Indian village and encouraged the Tsimpshian to take up residence. He went so far as to apply to the Department of Indian Affairs to make the village site an official reserve, however his offer was rejected on the grounds that the Department of Indian Affairs had authority only to deal with Crown, not private land (DIA Annual Report, 1883:91). Tsimpshian people,

2. See also: Ross' (1967:49-50; 59-60) discussion of the concentrated Indian population at Port Essington as a factor in the location of the salmon canneries there.

especially the Kisumkalum who lived upriver in the canyon, took up residence in the village during the canning season. Some stayed on during the winter, however many spent the off season in Fort Simpson, fifty miles north of the Skeena (B.C Fisheries Commission, 1892:375).[3] .

Another feature of cannery work was that particular populations became 'attached' to or associated with particular canneries. Specific canneries tended to recruit their labour forces from specific regions or villages in the vicinity. For example, Skogan (1983:37) reports that the Cassiar cannery, on the Skeena, drew its workforce primarily from the Tsimpshian villages of ~~Kitwanga and Kitsquecla~~, Hazelton and Kispiox which were located upstream. Large (1957:34) also notes that Indians were recruited from the settlements on the Skeena as far north as Kispiox to work at the canneries established on the estuary. On the other hand, the North Pacific cannery, established on the Skeena in 1889 is reported to have been worked mainly by Naas River people (Skogan, 1983:31,63). By the 1890's, however, Tsimpshian men and women from most of the communities in the Skeena-Naas region worked in one or another of the salmon canneries and fisheries (Knight, 1978:279, ft. note #5).

[II] INDIAN LABOUR: PARTICIPATION IN THE SALMON INDUSTRY

Much of the historical information regarding Indian labour in the salmon fishing and processing industry is general in

3. Francis Page, owner of the 'Wellington' and 'Delta' canneries on the Fraser, also made his land available, supplying housing around his canneries to his Indian labour (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:356).

nature. Specific details regarding which Indian groups worked for which canneries and when, are limited to scattered references in Department of Indian Affairs and Fisheries reports and in secondary published material. From these sources a general impression of Indian labour participation can be developed however a detailed examination of any particular group's experience is not possible. What follows below is a general outline of Indian labour in the salmon industry of British Columbia with particular reference to the Skeena-Nas region.

As Knight has noted, different sources yield varying approximations of the number of labourers and their ethnic composition. The variability of the estimates means that they should be interpreted cautiously and are useful only in developing a general sense of the importance of Indian labour over the period.

At the beginning of the industry, during the 1870's and the early 1880's, practically all the fishermen in the industry were Indian (McKervill, 1967:63). In 1883, there were some 3,084 fishermen and McKervill (1967:148) suggests that almost all of them must have been Indian. One year later in 1884, 1,280 Indian women and men are reported to working in the canneries alongside about as many Chinese men and supervised by 273 whites (Forrester, 1975:122). Forrester's figures are confirmed by Knight (1978:88) who estimates that in 1884 some seventeen B.C. canneries employed 2,710 cannery workers of which approximately half were Indian.

At the beginning of the industry it is clear that the B.C. Indian population was the most important source of labour. Practically all the fishermen and approximately one-half of the cannery workers were Indian. Using McKervill's, Forrester's and Knight's figures for 1883 and 1884 it can reasonably be suggested that about 75% of the labour employed in the salmon fishing and processing industry, at that time, was Indian.

For British Columbia as a whole the degree of participation by the Indian population changed significantly by the end of the nineteenth century. Indian fishermen and cannery workers went from making up a large majority of all workers to becoming a significant minority of all workers in the industry. This transformation varied regionally, however. In the north Indian labour retained a greater proportion of the available employment in the industry.

After reviewing varying approximations of the number of Indian fishermen working in the industry Knight (1978:83) estimates that between 1500 and 2000 Indian fishermen were working at the turn of the century.[4] The 1905-1907 Commission's figures also give us some idea of the relative

4. This estimate is based upon Ralston's (1965:48) information that 555 gillnet licenses were held by Indian fishermen on the Fraser in 1900 and Knight's conclusion that some of the 393 cannery licenses on the Fraser and approximately one-half of the 800 licenses on the Skeena and 400 licenses on the central coast would have been fished by Indian crews (Knight, 1978:83). In contradistinction to this relatively high estimate, estimates prepared by the 1905-1907 Royal Commission indicate that in 1900, Indians held only 347 licenses out of a total of 3767 licenses issued on the Fraser River (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:108). In order to determine the number of persons from the number of licenses they should be multiplied by two, to account for both the boat puller and the net-man.

proportion of Indian fishermen working on the Fraser River at this time. They estimated that in 1898, 850 out of a total 3664 gillnet licences were held by Indian fishermen (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:108). This represents some 23% of the total number. However, this figure underestimates Indian labour participation as it does not take into account the northern fishery where Indian fishermen continued to be predominate. The Commission figures for 1899 and 1900 show a rapid decline in the proportionate number of licences held by Indian fishermen, dropping to just less than 18% in 1899 and approximately 9% in 1900 (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:108).

An 1894 Anglo-Japanese treaty allowed unlimited Japanese immigration to British Columbia and during the 1890's this provided a new source of cheap labour for the canners (McKervill 1967:162). Forester (1975:156) reports that 452 Japanese fishermen emigrated in 1896, 787 in 1897, 800 in 1898 and 2,000 in 1899. The Japanese fishermen would work for less than either the whites or the Indians and by 1900 are reported to have comprised between one-third and 40% of the fishing labour force (Lawrence, 1951:68-69,76). Gladstone (1958:248), reports that in 1901 Japanese fishermen held 1,958 of 4,722 independent licences as well as most of the 1,090 'attached' licences. As well, after 1900, Japanese labour began to replace the labour of Indian women in the canneries (Gladstone, 1959:248).

Knight (1978:83) concludes that while an exact count of the number of Indian fishermen during the period is impossible due to conflicting sources, "...it is clear that they were being

gradually replaced by canneries contracting Japanese fishermen...". The 1905-07 Fisheries Commission provides evidence to support Knight's conclusion for the Fraser River fishery. The number of licences reported issued to Japanese fishermen rose inversely in relation to the decline in licences reported issued to Indian and White fishermen:

Table 6: Allocation of Fishing Licences by Ethnicity, 1898-1900

	White %		Japanese %		Indian %		Total
1898	2032	55	782	21	850	23	3664
1899	1905	55	919	27	621	18	3445
1900	1771	47	1655	44	341	9	3767

(B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:23)

A similar, though less radical, displacement of Indian fishermen appears to have occurred in the North as well. Ross notes that Nass and Skeena canners used cheaper Japanese labour during the depression of the mid 1890's to reduce costs. By 1902 almost one-half of the British America's and North Pacific's cannery licences were fished by Japanese labour. By 1904, there were equal numbers of Japanese and Indian fishermen on the Skeena (Ross, 1967:69).

Throughout the 1890's Department of Indian Affairs officials reported increasing competition in the labour market between Indians and persons of other races and as a result decreasing earnings (DIA Annual Report, 1892:224; 1896:165; 1898:189; 1899:247). Vowell, Indian Superintendent of British Columbia,

noted in his report of 1894 that the gross earnings of the B.C. Indian population had been declining in recent years. He accounts for this by noting the increasing competition in the labour market between Indian people and those of other nationalities.

"...where the natives used to be the only people available for such employment and pursuits; whitemen and Japanese, and others, are at the present time to be seen in all directions and in great numbers competing with them in the labour market, and in the occupations of fishing, trapping and hunting, etc." (DIA Annual Report, 1895:202)

Over the thirty year period from the commercial salmon fishing industry's inception to the turn of the century, Indian labour was transformed from a crucial to a relatively minor aspect of the industry. This conclusion however must be modified by three factors. First, Indian fishermen retained a higher participation rate in the northern fisheries than in the south. Second, though diminished in numbers the Indian fishermen continued to play a key role in the relations of production of the industry. Third, Indian people working in the canneries remained a significant minority of the inside labour force.

According to the Commission's figures approximately one-quarter of all cannery workers on the Fraser River were Indian at the turn of the century. They estimated that 1,056 out of 4,136 total employees in 41 canneries were Indian (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:108). The Commission arrived at this figure by multiplying the number of canning lines by the 'average' labour composition of each line: 10 whites, 60 Chinese, and 24 Indians.

Once again, however, these are only partial figures, excluding Indian labour in the northern canneries.

Knight concludes that while Indian labour in the Fraser canneries was partially displaced by Chinese labour during the 1890's they continued to remain an important element of the labour force until the present day. Furthermore they were 'crucial to production' in the north and on the central coast throughout the 1920's (Knight, 1978:87-88). The 1905-1907 Commission itself provides a higher estimate of the proportion of Indian labour. According to the Commissioners:

"The proportion of Indians will vary from one-third to one-half of the hands employed on the work." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1908:24)

They then go on to note that the proportion of Indian labourers employed in the north would be even greater (1908:24).

[III] INDIAN LABOUR IN THE SKEENA-NAAS REGION

Some sense of the importance of Indian labour to the salmon industry and the importance of this employment to the 19th century Indian economy can be gathered by examining the participation of the Tsimpshian in the industry. DIA and Fisheries Annual Reports and testimony before the 1892 Royal Commission are the best sources for this information.

In the 1881 Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs it is mentioned that in 1880 two large canneries on the Skeena attracted Indians within a hundred mile radius (1882:153). Men, women and children were reported to be making large amounts of money. In that year the men supplied the fish on contract to

the canneries while the women and children dressed the fish in preparation for canning (1882:154). In the same year it was reported that Tsimpshian Indians of Port Simpson and Metlakatla paid over \$10,000 into the customs revenue, much of which was earned through their work in the salmon canning industry (1882:147).

On the Naas, Kincolith Indians, men, women and children, were reported to be "working industriously" at the first cannery established there, with "profitable results" (1882:xliv,147).

In 1885 it was reported that the principal labour employed by the northern canneries was Indian and Chinese, with white foremen and engineers. In that year nearly all fishing was done on wages, a method of payment which the cannery men are reported to have considered the most economical. Men were paid an average of \$30 per month, women \$13, and boys \$7 (Fisheries Annual Report, 1886:277). Two years later, in 1887, John McNab, Fisheries Guardian on the Skeena and Naas reported that "salmon are caught exclusively by Indians", on his rivers and that many of the fishermen fish on contract, receiving a set price per fish (Fisheries Annual Report, 1888:253).

The next year he reported an increasing number of local Indians engaged in the commercial fishery using either their own or cannery boats (Fisheries Annual Report, 1890:256). Much greater incomes could be expected for those with their own boats and licenses though they were few and far between. Approximately 30 Indians bought gill net licenses to fish on the Naas and Skeena rivers in 1889 and Thomas Mowat, Inspector of Fisheries,

reported that many of these Indians made between \$300 and \$900 in six weeks of fishing (Fisheries Annual Report, 1890:51).

In 1889, Todd ranked Tsimpshian occupations in order of importance as follows: cannery employment, hunting and working for the whites (DIA Annual Report, 1890:151). Almost ten years later he continued to report that the salmon canning industry was the chief way in which the Indians of the North West Coast agency earned their living (DIA Annual Report, 1898:87). In fact, he seems to have had ambivalent feelings regarding the success that the Tsimpshian had had in the industry. In 1898 he expressed his concern that the gardens in his agency had suffered that year due to the fact that "nearly all the Indians went to the salmon canning business" (DIA Annual Report, 1900:258). He went on to note, however, that by neglecting their gardens the Tsimpshians were able to greatly increase their incomes at fishing and canning.

Testimony by cannery owners before the 1892 Royal Commission gives some indication of the importance of the local Indian population to their businesses. Alexander James McClellan, a salmon cannery proprietor on the Naas testified that he employed Indian fishermen exclusively. His cannery controlled 43 of the 80-90 licenses on the river (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:282-283). At the same time William Dempster's 'Windsor Cannery' on the Skeena fished 40 boats. He testified that the total number of licenses for the river was 300 and that these licenses were fished by Indian labour (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:310).

In fact, the Skeena river canners' preference for Indian labour was a source of contention for at least two Europeans living at Port Essington. However, their complaints about the hiring practices of the canneries were dismissed out of hand. They were informed by the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries that the canners preference for Indian fishermen "to the class of White labour available on the Skeena" was not a matter of concern to the department (Hardie, 1894).

At the beginning of the period Indians on the Naas and Skeena rivers combined traditional subsistence production with opportunities for wage labour. In 1881, Naas River Tsimpshian at Kincolith completed a very successful harvest of oolachen in the spring before they went on to earn some cash at the canneries in July (DIA Annual Report, 1882:148). On the Skeena that year it was reported that the Tsimpshian came, "...both with a view of obtaining lucrative occupation, as well as taking their own winter's supply of salmon for home consumption" (DIA Annual Report, 1882:153).

Work fishing and canning seems to have quickly assumed an important role in the economy of the Tsimpshian people. In fact, by all reports, it became the principal source of income for the Naas and Skeena river people. By 1889, C. Todd, Indian agent to the Tsimpshian could report that:

"The principal industry upon which the Indians here depend at present is the canning of salmon, and it is one at which men, women and even children find very remunerative employment." (DIA Annual Report, 1890:118)

Traditional hunting, fishing and gathering activities, as well as other cash income generating work, became secondary to wage work.

in the salmon industry while it was available. Todd noted that the Indians of his agency cease all other economic activities beginning in May and June to work at the canneries in the vicinity for as long as the work continues (DIA Annual Report, 1890:119).

During the 1880's work in the salmon industry came to replace hunting for fur as the most important income generating activity for at least one group of Tsimpshian people, those living at Metlakatla. During most of the nineteenth century hunting for furs along the streams running into the Skeena was these Tsimpshians principal source of income and clothing. However, by the latter decades of the nineteenth century the hunting had deteriorated due to intense competition for furs and the erosion of traditional property rights due to the introduction of the concept of 'Crown' land. Between periods of cannery work they continued to hunt for furs, but the hunting was poor and the incomes derived from this source small (British Columbia, 1888:458).

After the canning season closed, the Tsimpshian returned to their homes and fishing sites and caught and dried salmon for their own use (DIA Annual Report, 1890:119). Similarly, Indians on the Naas also obtained their winter's supply of salmon after the end of the commercial season. In the Fisheries Annual Report for 1889, Naas river Indians were reported to have been using 'non-traditional methods' for the last three years, apparently the same nets they had been using for commercial fishing (1890:257).

In some cases subsistence and commercial fishing could be combined directly. At many canning operations it was a common practice to give rejected species or surplus salmon to Indian workers and their families for their own use (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:213).

According to Department of Indian Affairs' figures the Tsimpshian were the wealthiest Indian group in British Columbia at the time. A statistical appendix to the annual report of 1889 shows that the Indians of the NWC agency earned some \$350,000 in industries other than agriculture. While these earnings are not broken down by source and subsistence production is assigned an estimated dollar value and included, Agent Todd's report of the economic statistics of the Tsimpshian suggests that the bulk of these earnings were derived from work in the salmon industry. The catch of subsistence fish was valued at \$56,000; furs were taken valued at \$51,000; and other industries produced \$225,000 (DIA Annual Report, 1890:151). The total amount earned by all Indians in British Columbia was estimated at \$600,000. In comparison, the Indians of the Lower Fraser Agency which had the second highest estimated dollar value earnings, earned just over \$100,000. In fact, the NWC agency had the highest estimated earnings of any agency in the country. The 1889 report notes that:

"The Indians of the Tsimpsean Nation earn more money in proportion to their numbers than any other Indians and have acquired more expensive habits than any other tribes of this coast, or elsewhere." (DIA Annual Report, 1890:118)

To a great extent this can be attributed to their ability to successfully combine wage work and subsistence production.

Once having entered the capitalist labour market however, the Tsimpshian became vulnerable to the fluctuations of the world economy. In his 1885 Annual report, Superintendent Powell noted that the establishment of salmon canneries on the north-west coast had provided 'employment and profit' to the Indians in the vicinity for the past 5 or 6 years. He went on to note however, that two years of poor markets had resulted in the closure of almost all of the canning establishments and had created the unemployment of Indians in the vicinity (DIA Annual Report, 1885:28). As a consequence of the commercial fishing industry depression north-west coast Indians were reported to be experiencing life threatening hardship. Powell notes:

"There will be considerable suffering in consequence, and it is doubtful if many of them will be able 'to pull through' a hard winter without some assistance."
(DIA Annual Report, 1886:119)

Powell attributes this suffering to the shortcomings of the 'nature' of Indian people themselves suggesting they are "not a provident people" and that they live a "happy-go-lucky" existence and consequently suffer when there is a "failure in the supply of comforts to which they have been accustomed" (DIA Annual Report, 1886:119).

In fact, the Tsimpshian made at least two different kinds of responses to a shortage of work in the salmon industry. One response of the northern Indians was to search for employment further afield. Naas, Port Simpson, and Metlakatla people were reported to be for the most part unsuccessful in their search for

employment in the hop fields of Washington State (DIA Annual Report, 1886:119).

A more successful response was to increase their production of subsistence goods. There appears to have been an inverse relationship between income earned through wage work and the production of subsistence food stuffs. The Tsimpshian compensated for low earnings due to the economic depression of the early 1890's and increased competition in the labour market by catching greater quantities of salmon for their own use. Todd made mention of this relationship in his 1895 report:

"...the small earnings of Indians at white men's industries had the effect of starting them into an extra effort to secure more than usual [amounts] of dried fish for winter use so that, although the Indians had not the means to purchase the usual quantity of white men's food, there has been no real scarcity..." (DIA Annual Report, 1896:165)

Capitalists, the Church and the State actively promoted the participation of Indian people as workers in the salmon industry by recruiting in their villages, locating processing plants in their midst, providing training in related skills and by attempting to instil industrial work habits and a protestant work ethic in the population. In part because of these strategies to pull them into the industrial work force Indian people had a high participation rate during the 1880's and into the 1890's. Employment in the industry provided Indian people with cash incomes and their ability to combine subsistence production and employment opportunities drew them in the capitalist labour market. However the incorporation of Indian people into the capitalist economy also made them subject to the fluctuations of

capitalist development. Indian people experienced unemployment, poverty and perhaps starvation when depressed markets or competition from other workers displaced their labour.

Chapter Four examines factors which pushed Indian people into the industry's workforce and shaped and restricted the extent of their participation in the industry. It is argued that the basic mechanism of 'primitive accumulation' was the progressive development of state regulation of the salmon resource.

Chapter Four: The Restriction of Native Fishing Rights Before 1900

Prior to the introduction of the commercial salmon industry and the subsequent regulation of the fishery, the salmon was an economic resource freely available to Indian people. It was captured both as a supply of food and as an article of commerce. It could be eaten, stored, traded or sold. The regulation of the fishery created new definitions of the salmon resource and transferred ownership of the resource from Indian people to the State. The State allowed various groups access to the salmon resource; however, the history of the development of the fishery is characterized by the progressive restriction of the access of Indian people to the resource.

As a result of the restriction of their subsistence and commercial rights Indian people were compelled to participate in the industry on terms favourable to capitalist interests. The restriction of subsistence rights increased their dependence upon incomes earned in the industry. The restriction of commercial rights meant that the participation of Indian people in the industry could be shaped to suit the interests of the canners.

[I] The Conflict Between the Commercial and Subsistence Fishery

As soon as the salmon resource began to be commercially exploited the extent of native fishing rights became a question that had to be resolved. This conflict was first brought to a head with the establishment of Annadale's cannery on the Fraser, the first commercial canning operation in British Columbia. Concern was expressed in a local newspaper that this commercial

enterprise threatened to deplete the Indians' supply of salmon. Foreshadowing later problems, the editor replied to these concerns by insisting that the supply of salmon was "practically inexhaustible affording room for hundreds of fishing establishments" (McKervill, 1967:36).

The first establishment of canneries on the Skeena also raised the question of native fishing rights in the north. Indians on the Skeena took militant action to stop the first cannery fish boats from fishing in their waters, seizing the nets of the North West Company. The response of the Department of Indian Affairs was to send out a gunboat as a show of support and to protect the interests of the local canners (Powell, 1878b). Prior to this incident the Department of Indian Affairs had received numerous complaints from the Indians of the north-west coast about the encroachment of whites on their fisheries. Indian Superintendent Powell is reported to have investigated these reports during a visit he made to the north-west coast in 1879 (DIA Annual Report, 1881:117). However, his response was less than adequate. Powell simply recommended that an Indian agent be appointed on the north-west coast in order to "...protect certain valuable fishing grounds" (DIA Annual Report, 1882:148).

As the industry expanded in the north it continued to conflict with Tsimshian fishing rights. In 1881, the Tsimshian informed the Department of Indian Affairs that whites were pre-empting the best fishing spots on the Skeena (DIA Annual Report, 1882:148). On the Naas, the Kinalith people expressed concern

that the canneries were threatening their winter supply of food (DIA Annual Report, 1883:83). Throughout the 1880's the Department of Indian Affairs received repeated complaints from the Skeena River Tsimpshian that cannery fishing disrupted their subsistence fishing on that river.

The response of the northern Indians to the encroachment of commercial interests on their fishery varied in intensity. When petitions and appeals to the government failed to resolve the dispute more forceable measures were taken. The Kitkatla Indians claimed the exclusive right to fish the waters of Low Inlet. Chief Shukes forbid the cannery manager there to fish in their waters and threatened to cut his nets if he persisted. Chief Shukes explained the issue to Fisheries Guardian Morrison as follows:

"Judge O'Reilly gave this land and water to my people, I do not want any Whitemen to fish here please tell your chief I have fished at Low's Inlet for 8 years, it is the principle support of myself and my people. I do not want trouble, but will do my best to hold the exclusive right for myself and people to fish this Low Inlet water..." (Morrison, 1890).

Nearby, on Banks Island, a fisherman for a Low Inlet cannery was told that he would be shot if he dropped his seine net into the water (Morrison, 1890).

Complaints by the Tsimpshian regarding encroachment on their fisheries by commercial interests were, by no means unique. The 1881 report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries noted that similar complaints had been received from Indians on the Fraser and elsewhere in the province. However these complaints were not

taken seriously, they were all dismissed as "equally baseless" (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:208).

However, local Department of Indian Affairs officials agreed that the monopolization of the fishery by whites was a matter of serious concern. According to these officials the lack of arable land in the vicinity and the importance of salmon as a subsistence staple meant that native fishing rights were particularly important in the north (Powell, 1878a, 1878b).

In fact, even the Department of Marine and Fisheries accepted in principle that native people had some aboriginal rights in the fishery and that it was important to maintain those rights, at least as long as they did not conflict with commerce. Fishery Inspector Anderson, recommended in 1881, that "hereditary rights" to fishing stations on "small rivulets along the coast" be assigned to them "free of vexatious interference" (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:209). He noted that while these rivers were of little or no commercial importance, for subsistence purposes the right to exploit them was crucial to the Indians (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:209). However, when native fishing came into conflict with commercial fishing native rights had to be defined.

For the most part, the definition of native fishing rights occurred through the application of the federal governments Fisheries Act and Regulations to the B.C. fishery. The regulation of the industry prior to the twentieth century resulted in a progressive diminishment of native rights to the salmon fishery.

[II] Native Fishing Rights Within the Jurisdiction of the Department of Marine and Fisheries.

The initial conflict between the canneries and the native food fishery gave impetus to the creation of the first reserves in the north. O'Reilly, the Indian Reserve Commissioner, visited the Skeena/Naas region in 1881, at the urgent request of William Duncan, in order to establish reserves, principally at fishing sites. Duncan was concerned that due to the great demand for land on which to build canneries, construction would occur on Indian fishing sites (British Columbia, 1887:257-258; British Columbia, 1888:458).

However, the creation of reserves at native fishing sites was not sufficient to guarantee the protection of native fishing rights. O'Reilly noted in his report for the year 1882, that while he reserved some sites specifically because they were fishing stations, the Tsimpshian did not have exclusive or special fishing rights.[1]

"I carefully explained to the Naas and Tsimpshian Indians, that in assigning to them the several sights on the coast and tidal waters, no exclusive right of fishing was conveyed, but that they would, like their white brethren, be subject in every respect to the laws and regulations set forth in the Fishery Acts of the Dominion." (DIA Annual Report, 1883:91)

The question of whether or not O'Reilly had the power to assign fishing rights as well as reserves became a matter of dispute between the Department of Indian Affairs and the

1. It appears as though O'Reilly was not as clear on this point as he imagined, a number of different sources, including Indian Agents W.H. Lomas of the West Coast agency and Todd of the North West coast agency and the Kitkathla Indians of Love Inlet, insisted that O'Reilly explicitly guaranteed fishing rights when laying out reserves (Morrison, 1890; Lomas, no date; Todd, no

Department of Marine and Fisheries. In order to clarify the respective jurisdictions of the two departments regarding fishing rights, legal advice was sought. The Department of Justice ruled that the Indian Reserve Commissioner could lay out reserves but had no jurisdiction over the fishery.

"...the Indian Reserve Commissioner has not the power to set apart for the exclusive use of the Indians any of the waters of British Columbia." (Sedgewick, 1890)

The Department of Justice concluded, however, that should they so choose, it was within the jurisdiction of the Department of Marine and Fisheries to reserve certain waters for Indian use by refraining from licensing whites (Sedgewick, 1890).

The Department of Indian Affairs argued that Indians should have the fishing rights in the vicinity of the reserves set out by O'Reilly, and that he should be able to indicate which fisheries should be reserved at the same time. Subsequently, these rights should be approved by the Department of Marine and Fisheries (VanKoughnet, 1891).

The Department of Marine and Fisheries declined to cooperate, arguing that the provisions in the regulations allowing subsistence fishing were adequate and that Indians must be bound by these regulations in order to protect the interests of licensed fishermen (Tupper, 1891). Dewdney, the Minister responsible for Indian Affairs, accepted these arguments and ordered his Indian agents to instruct their charges that they must comply with the fishing regulations (Dewdney, 1891).

Thus began the debate between Indian people, the Department of Indian Affairs and the Department of Marine and Fisheries.

over the nature and extent of native fishing rights. In general, Indians argued that it was their understanding that in exchange for accepting reserves and giving up possession of the land to the Crown they had been guaranteed their right to hunt and fish as they always had (Vowell, 1895). The Department of Indian Affairs argued that fishing rights, while crucial, were outside their jurisdiction. Their role could only be that of an advocate, lobbying the Department of Marine and Fisheries for greater rights. The Department of Marine and Fisheries argued that Indians had to be subject to regulation for three reasons: first, in order to protect the rights of those participating in the commercial fishery; second, in order to generate revenue from the salmon fishery; and third, to ensure conservation of the fish stock (Tilton, 1889). As a result,

"Indians were bound to comply with the fishery laws and regulations, in the same manner as other fishermen; unless specially exempted therefrom..." (Tupper, 1891)

[III] The Development of Fishery Regulations Which Restricted The Native Subsistence Food Fishery

a) Prior to 1889

As early as 1874 concerns were being expressed about a conflict between native fishing rights and regulation of the fishery by the Dominion government. The provincial agent of the Department of Fisheries advised that:

"...the extension of the fishery laws of the Dominion in their entirety to this country would be productive of not substantial benefit, but would rather probably lead to complications with the Aborigines." (Lawrence, 1951:80)

None the less, three years later, on July 1, 1877 the British Columbia fishery was brought under the jurisdiction of the Dominion Fisheries Act. At that time no specific regulations were formulated for the B.C. fishery. Only those regulations of general application under the Act were applied (Ainsworth, 1946:67). The application of these regulations, however, introduced the first legislative restrictions on fishing rights previously held by Indians. Henceforth, all those fishing for salmon commercially were required to be licensed. While the first regulations to govern the B.C. fishery restricted Indian participation commercially, the subsistence fishery remained unregulated.

b) The General Fishery Regulations of 1889 and the 1892 Amendments

The first regulations designed specifically for the B.C. fishery were the General Fishery Regulations of 1889 (British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:x-xi). These regulations restricted Indian subsistence fishing rights for the first time by bringing this type of economic activity under legal jurisdiction and by restricting the methods by which salmon could be caught for subsistence purposes.

The first clause of the 1889 regulations gave Indian people permission to fish for salmon for subsistence purposes by excluding them from the requirement to obtain licenses or leases.

for this purpose[2]. It also imposed conditions under which subsistence fishing was allowed to occur:

"1. Fishing by means of nets or other apparatus without leases or licenses from the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, is prohibited on all waters of the Province of British Columbia.

Provided always, that Indians shall at all times have liberty to fish for the purpose of providing food for themselves, but not for sale, barter or traffic, by any means other than with drift nets or spearing."
(British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:x)

The prohibition of certain methods of subsistence fishing served to restrict native fishing rights. Next to fish traps, gillnetting was the second most productive fishing technique, and the use of spears to capture salmon obstructed by dams and weirs was a common practice (Forrester, 1975:55). By prohibiting the use of drift nets and spears, the regulations had the effect of reducing the productivity of the Indian food fishery.

Mr. Armstrong, a Commissioner with the 1892 Royal Commission on the B.C. Fishery, referring to native fishing rights suggested that, "the law intends they shall have the same facilities they had before whitemen came here" (1892:394). However, Captain George, a native Indian from Harrison River, and Indian Agent, P. Tiernan, explained to the Commissioners the problems that the regulations presented to subsistence fishing. They pointed out that before the whitemen came Indians had nets, and they argued

2. Initially subsistence 'rights' were interpreted broadly by Indians and Department of Indian Affairs officials. John McNab reported to his Minister that Indian agents in the province were interpreting Section 1(a) of the Fishery Regulations to mean the Indians were entitled to catch and sell any kind of fish for the purpose of providing food for themselves and their families. (McNab, 1894). The Department of Marine and Fisheries strongly

that now the regulations, in effect, prohibited Indians from subsistence fishing, because "...under that law they cannot fish unless they go in and catch fish with their hands" (1892:194).

The prohibition against the sale, barter and trade of subsistence salmon completed the process of differentiating between subsistence and commercial salmon. Subsistence salmon were those salmon caught by a limited number of readily available traditional fishing techniques. Commercial salmon were those salmon caught by a limited number of techniques which required the investment of capital. By prohibiting the sale of 'subsistence' salmon in the commercial market, it meant that Indians that wanted to fish commercially had to either accumulate enough capital to acquire 'commercial' means of production, or hire themselves out as wage labourers to those who owned these means of production. This distinction between commercial and subsistence salmon restricted Indians' ability to participate in the commercial fishery and shaped the form of that participation.

It soon became clear that the permission to subsistence fish was not to be considered a 'right' of Indian people. The Department of Marine and Fisheries made it clear in their dealings with the Department of Indian Affairs that they controlled all 'rights' in the fishery and that access was a privilege which they could both confer and take away. Referring to subsistence fishing, Tupper commented:

"...such permission is not to be considered a right, but as an act of grace, which may be withdrawn at any time, should it be found that it is abused, or used for other purposes than those for which it is granted."

Department and interfere with its officers, in the performance of their duties." (Tupper, 1891)

Hence rather than protecting Indian fishing rights, the clause which permitted subsistence fishing, served to restrict such rights by first, narrowly defining the rights and second, making such rights an act of largesse which could be withdrawn at any time.

Additional regulations, introduced June 1, 1892, contained a new clause which underlined the Department of Marine and Fishery's contention that Indians had no special or aboriginal rights in the fishery. Upon purchasing a permit for the fee of \$2, each and every 'resident settler' of the province of British Columbia was now entitled to fish for family use (British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:xi). The 'privilege' which Indians had been permitted in 1889 was now extended to everyone. Furthermore, Indian access to the subsistence fishery was now further restricted by the institutionalization of competition in this sphere.

c) The 1894 Regulations

The result of two inquiries into the B.C. fishery, the Royal Commission of 1892 and an earlier inquiry by Samuel Wilmot, was the introduction of a new set of regulations which became effective May 1, 1894 (Fisheries Regulations Order, 1894).[3] These regulations further restricted the native food fishery by limiting the methods of capturing the salmon; limiting the periods of times when subsistence fishing was permitted; and

limiting the areas where fishing could be undertaken.

Furthermore, the new regulations reinforced the concept that Indian subsistence fishing was a privilege rather than a right and increased competition in this sphere.

Whenever the salmon runs were poor, attention was focused upon native fishing techniques. Department of Marine and Fisheries officials, canners, and white fishermen attributed both the fluctuation in and the depletion of the supply of salmon to these subsistence techniques. Beginning with the Marine and Fisheries Annual Report of 1886, the theory that the capture of salmon by Indians at the headwaters of rivers caused the fluctuation in the salmon runs became a common feature of Fisheries Reports (Fisheries Annual Report, 1887:248; 1892:167; 1895:369; 1896:193; 1899:221; 1900:196). The 1892 Fisheries Commission characterized the modes of Indian fishing as 'improvident and reckless' (British Columbia Fisheries Commission 1892:xi). The new regulations further decreased the productivity of the native food fishery by further restricting the types of techniques and technologies permissible. Targeted for prohibition in this set of regulations were the use of weirs and dams to aid in the capture of spawning salmon (Fisheries Regulation Order, 1894).

For the first time the subsistence fishery became subject to the closures enforced in the commercial fishery. The 1894 Regulations prohibited subsistence fishing in restricted areas and during the closures scheduled for commercial fishing.

(Fisheries Regulation Order, 1894). By restricting the times of the year and the areas of the province where fishing could occur the productivity of the subsistence fishery was reduced.

With the 1894 Regulations, the Department of Marine and Fisheries understanding of native subsistence fishing as a privilege rather than a right became codified. For the first time, Indians were required by law to seek the permission of the Inspector of Fisheries before they fished for subsistence purposes (Fisheries Regulations Order, 1894). By requiring permission and demanding compliance with the law the state had effectively usurped ownership rights to subsistence as well as commercial salmon.

At the same time as the access to the salmon resource was being restricted to native Indians it was being opened to other residents of the province. The fee for permits allowing settlers to subsistence fish was reduced from \$2 to \$1 (Fisheries Regulation Order, 1894).

Before the development of the commercial salmon industry and the regulation of the salmon resource Indian people had controlled and exploited the resource freely. Regulation progressively restricted the access of Indian people to the resource. Furthermore, competition for the resource increased dramatically as the commercial industry expanded and a growing white settler population also exploited the resource. Salmon runs were disrupted and traditional fishing sites were usurped.

Indians, the Department of Indian Affairs and Provincial Government officials expressed great concern over the effect the new regulations would have upon the Indian people of British Columbia. In general they felt that the regulations imposed undue restrictions upon the food fishery and as a result threatened their self sufficiency.

The critics argued that technically the 'permission' clause was impractical and unworkable. The spatial distribution of Indian people across the province meant that it was impossible for each Indian to obtain a permit (Gaudin, 1894a). The Province argued that this regulation, while generally unenforceable, would be the source of great hardship to Indian people where it was enforceable (Executive Council, 1894).

Another critic, former Fisheries Commissioner Samuel Wilmot, noted a conflict between the right to catch fish 'at any time', guaranteed in the first clause of the Regulations, and the later requirement to observe the closures. Wilmot interprets the regulations to mean that Indians could only fish during the open season, only with the permission of the Inspector of Fisheries, and only for the purpose of feeding themselves and their families. In his opinion,

"...by some oversight or improper wording of the regulations, the Indian does seem to be more than unnecessarily restricted in B.C.." (Wilmot, 1894)

The Provincial Government saw the restriction of subsistence fishing rights as a threat to the independence of the Indian

(Davie, 1894). In their critique of the new regulations they noted that unlike Indians in other provinces and territories the Indians of British Columbia were largely self-sufficient. This self sufficiency, for the majority of Indians, was dependent upon the supply of fish and game. In the opinion of the Province the regulations would have the "...effect of taking away the food supply of the Indians...", and if the prohibitions are enforced the Province predicted that they "...will entail enormous hardship upon the Indians of the Province generally" (Executive Council, 1894). They urged the federal government to make alternative arrangements for supplying the Indians of B.C. with provisions if they intended to continue with the offending regulations (Executive Council, 1894).

The provincial government was afraid that the widespread opposition to and the general dissatisfaction of Indian people with the regulations would result in a generalized state of unrest or rebellion. At the very least the province expected that the enforcement of the regulations would result in 'serious breaches of the peace' (Executive Council, 1894).

Department of Indian Affairs officials were also concerned that the restriction of access to salmon would adversely affect the economy of Indian people. Commenting upon the restriction of Indian subsistence techniques, specifically the prohibition of traps and weirs, Frank Dewlin, Indian Agent on the Fraser River, informed his superiors of the consequences as he saw them:

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simply taking the means of living away from them."
(Devlin, 1895).

The Department of Marine and Fisheries denied the charges of their critics. They argued that the 'permission' clause was not impractical due to the mobility of Indians during the canning season and that the new regulations would not significantly affect the Indians' ability to produce for subsistence (Prince, no date:a).

The Minister was advised by his agents in British Columbia, Captain Jaudin and Professor Prince, that in fact the concerns regarding Indian unrest were exaggerated. Jaudin assured the Minister that there was "...no danger of serious trouble" (Gaudin, 1894b). Prince suggested that the Indians were being manipulated by white men who hoped to benefit from Indian fishing privileges:

"...the real root of the anticipated dissatisfaction is the mischievous action of certain white men who instigate the Indians to break the law and to be dissatisfied: profiting by the special privileges which the Indians are urged to claim." (Prince, 1894).

However, the strength of the opposition to the new regulations forced the Department of Marine and Fisheries to make concessions. Charles Tupper, the Minister, responded to the criticism by offering a revised interpretation of them. Admitting that they "...may, perhaps be a little ambiguous", he suggested that departmental instructions to Fishery Overseers would resolve any difficulties the Indians might face. According to Tupper, while no fishing would be allowed without a license, a permit could be issued to Indians to fish at any time - in or out

of close season, for the purpose of providing food for themselves (Tupper, 1894).

[IV] The Restriction of Commercial Fishing Rights By the Application of the Dominion Fisheries Act

Unlike the State and other commercial interests Indian people did not make the same distinction between subsistence and commercial salmon. Throughout the period they maintained that they retained hereditary rights to the salmon resource for both subsistence and commercial purposes. As a result, they argued that they should be free to participate in the commercial industry unfettered by the regulations and licensing requirements that the whites were subject to.

While the State acknowledged limited subsistence rights, no similar acknowledgment was made of commercial rights. For the most part, the regulation of the commercial industry developed in response to the conflict between capital and labour over the price of labour. Indian people were a significant segment of the working class in this industry and as such were directly affected by the rules introduced by the State to regulate the conflict between capital and labour. However, as the original owners of the salmon resource they were also affected. The effect of the regulation of the industry was that over time Indian people's ability to participate in the commercial industry was progressively restricted.

With the application of the Dominion Fisheries Act to British Columbia in 1877, all persons, including Indian people, were required to be licensed in order to fish commercially. A

licensing system was not immediately implemented. However, in 1881 the cannery owners and the Victoria Board of Trade were reported to be in support of the concept of licensing (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:218-219). One year later, in 1882, a licensing system was in effect and reported to be working well (Fisheries Annual Report, 1883:190). While the number of licenses to independent fishermen was not initially restricted, license fees were collected and violators of the licensing provision were subject to prosecution.

The Tsimpshian objected strongly to the Dominion Governments claim to the right to license fishermen on the Skeena and Naas rivers. The Tsimpshian believed that they controlled the rights of access to the salmon resource. The fish in the rivers belonged to the Tsimpshian people and others needed their permission to harvest the resource, not the permission of the Fisheries Inspector. Their position was very clearly explained to Fisheries Guardian McNab by a Naas River chief:

"...the chief very gravely informed me that I had done very wrong in collecting money for fishing on the Naas, without having asked permission from him, that the river belonged to him and his people, that it was right that white men should buy licenses, but that he and his people should receive the money, that they were entitled to it all..." (Fisheries Annual Report, 1889:249)

The opposition of the Naas and Skeena River people to the licensing of salmon fishing was clearly based upon their claim to ownership of the fish resource. They not only felt that the government's attempt to generate revenue from the fishery was an unwarranted abrogation of their property rights but also that buying licenses legitimated the government's illegitimate claim

to the resource. According to McNab, the Indians believed that by buying licenses, "they would renounce forever the peculiar privileges which they now claim" (Fisheries Annual Report, 1890:256). As a result, Indian fishermen working for the Northern canneries refused to buy licenses. In order to avoid conflict with the Indians and the Department of Marine and Fisheries, and to ensure that business could continue as usual, it was the practice of the Northern cannery owners to pay the license fees for their fishermen. The government was uncomfortable with this arrangement however, because as Guardian McNab pointed out it tended,

"...to confirm the Indians in the belief that the law could not touch them." (Fisheries Annual Report, 1890:256)

Enforcement of the provisions of the Fisheries Act was the job of Fisheries Guardian who patrolled the fishery during the fishing season. In addition the Guardian could call upon the department for reinforcements should additional help be necessary. For the this purpose, the Department of Marine and Fisheries and the Department of Indian Affairs shared the use of the HMS 'Rocket'. The vessel was used to enforce the law, mainly through intimidation. The importance, to the department, of the threat of force can be seen in Fisheries Inspector Anderson comments after the temporary removal of the warship in 1882:

"Meanwhile our extensive line of coast has been left, at least temporarily, without that show of protection - symbol~~ic~~ of the power to restrain or punish - to which the peaceful condition of our coast-line has been largely due, and under which the continued investment of capital in the development of our fisheries has securely proceeded." (Fisheries Annual Report, 1883:191)

The 'HMS Rocket' was more than just a symbol of the Dominion's power. On more than one occasion it had been used to ambush Indian villages that were suspected of harbouring law-breakers[4]. For example, in 1876, the HMS Rocket bombarded the village of Kemsquit and an unknown number of people were reported to have died of exposure as a result (DIA Annual Report, 1882:xlirii). As well government warships visited the village of Metlakatla a number of times in order to arrest and jail Tsimpshian people (British Columbia, 1887:462a).

While illegal fishermen were subject to prosecution, enforcement of the licensing provision proved to be difficult. During the initial period of absolute labour shortages in the industry, the canners were able to increase their supply of fish by buying salmon that had been caught illegally by Indian fishermen. This was especially prevalent in the Skeena/Naas region. Fisheries Guardian McNab reported that on the Skeena and Naas Rivers Indians fished illegally in the more remote and distant parts of the river and delivered their fish to licensed fishermen who then sold them to the canneries (Fisheries Annual Report, 1888:253).

In an attempt to control illegal fishing the Department of Marine and Fisheries ordered the northern canneries to buy fish only from licensed fishermen (Fisheries Annual Report, 1889:243). McNab reported that as a result the Skeena Indians were very angry with him, and threatened to resist his authority (Fisheries Annual Report, 1889:250). The Indians fishing on the Skeena

4. For more information on the maritime use of force to control the Indian population of British Columbia see Gough (1984).

informed the Fisheries Inspector that while they intended to fish as they pleased, they had no intention of taking out licenses another season (Fisheries Annual Report, 1889:243). Inspector Mowat advocated a firm response to Indian resistance:

"I am of the opinion that the only way this illegal fishing can be prevented is by the presence of a sufficient force of guardians or a small armed cruiser to seize all nets, boats and canoes which do not comply with the regulations." (Fisheries Annual Report, 1889:243)

In 1889, the government continued its campaign to enforce the fisheries regulations in the North. McNab seized boats and nets from three Indian fishermen. His actions resulted in a confrontation with the Indians which was resolved by a compromise of sorts. The fishermen signed license applications in their own names and McNab returned their belongings without a fine. The fine was waived in recognition of the relative strength and determination of the Indian fishermen. As McNab put it, he did not fine them because a fine "...could not have been collected without a large special force" (Fisheries Annual Report, 1890:257). McNab may also have had in mind reports that the Tsimpsian carried firearms in their fish boats (Fisheries Annual Report, 1890:257).

In 1892, another Fisheries Guardian was assigned to the / Skeena in order to more vigorously enforce the fishery regulations (Fisheries Annual Report, 1892:158). Furthermore, McNab recommended that the regulations be more actively enforced by sending an agent into the spawning grounds upriver during the spawning season in order to induce the Indians to remove their weirs (Fisheries Annual Report, 1892:167).

The Tsimpshians insistence upon their rights to the fishery and their willingness to use force to defend these rights appears to have been taken seriously by the government. McNab warned the government in his 1889 report of the consequences of ignoring the right of the northern Indians to participate in the commercial fishery:

"And here I would say that in any future regulation limiting the number of licenses to be issued on the Naas River the fact that a large number of Indians will doubtless make application for the same should be taken into account, and that to refuse them, would likely be productive of unpleasant results." (Fisheries Annual Report, 1889:257)

The result of the Tsimpshians resistance to licensing appears to have been two-fold. The limitations on the number of licenses issued to canners and fishermen was delayed in the north. Unlike the south, there was no restriction on the number of licenses issued until the introduction of the 1892 amendments to the 1889 regulations. Testifying before the 1892 Fisheries Commission, McClellan, the Naas River canner, reported that he always got as many licenses as he applied for with no restriction. Second, due to their resistance the northern Indian fishermen were not required to pay the licensing fee. As noted above, the canners paid the fee themselves (British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:203,310).

During this period the concept that only certain 'commercial techniques' could be used in the commercial industry was developed. In 1883, purse seines and traps were prohibited from commercial use (Lawrence, 1951:83). However even before this, similar native techniques, the use of river weirs and dams, had

been outlawed in the commercial fishery. In his 1881 report, Inspector Anderson noted that a number of canneries in the province were buying salmon caught above tide water by Indians using traditional techniques. Anderson considered this an abuse of Indian privilege and ordered the practice stopped (Fisheries Annual Report, 1882:203).

The application of the Dominion Fisheries Act to B.C. waters restricted Indian commercial fishing rights by transferring control over rights of access to the Dominion government and by limiting the types of technologies that could be used in the commercial fishery. These restrictions were amplified by the regulations introduced after 1888.

[V] Subsequent Regulation of the Commercial Industry

Between 1889 and 1900 the Dominion Government introduced and amended a series of regulations which had the effect of restricting the access of commercial fishermen to the salmon resource. As no 'special' commercial rights had been granted to Indian fishermen they were also subject to these regulations. As well, a number of regulations were introduced which tended to institutionalize the role of Indians as a reserve army of labour in the commercial fishery. Finally, regulations were introduced just prior to the turn of the century which reduced the size of this reserve army and in effect reduced the participation rate of Indian fishermen.

a) Restricted Access to the Salmon Resource

With the 1889 Regulations, the Department of Marine and Fisheries radically increased its control over the B.C. salmon fishery. The Department significantly reduced access to the salmon resource in two ways. First, they restricted the number of persons who could harvest the resource. Under the new regulations the Minister could determine the number of boats, nets and other fishing gear which could be used in any water in British Columbia. In that year the Minister limited the number of licenses issued on the Fraser River to 500, 350 to be issued to the canners and 150 to freezers and independent fishermen (British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:x-xi). An unofficial quota of 40 independent licenses was allotted to some 3,000 or 3,500 Indians on the river (British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:46).

Testimony before the 1892 Fisheries Commission indicates that the demand for independent licenses by Indians on the Fraser was greater than the quota allotted. The Fraser River Indians saw the restriction of salmon fishing licenses as a violation of their traditional right to full participation in the commercial fishery.

George, described as a native Chinook Indian of Harrison River, complained to the Commission that Indians on the Fraser were only allotted a small number of licenses. His sense of injustice about the restriction was expressed in terms of the alienation of an economic resource which had recently belonged solely to his people.

"He says the white men come here and get licenses and his people were here first. It is the same old story.

The white men come and get licenses first in preference to them, and he says they should not...He says God gave them these waters and the fish and the land, and now it is taken away by the newcomers." (British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:392).

Clearly, the right of Indians to participate fully in the commercial fishery was considered as much of an aboriginal right as their right to a subsistence fishery.

Second, restrictions were placed on fishing technology, the areas where fishing was permissible were limited and weekly closures were introduced. Under the regulations no nets were permitted in fresh water; drift netting was confined to tidal waters. Nets could not obscure more than one-third of the the river. A weekly close period was introduced prohibiting fishing between 6pm Saturday and 6pm Sunday (British Columbia Fisheries Commission, 1892:x-xi). All of these measures reduced the access of fishermen to the salmon resource.

The 1894 Regulations also introduced a seasonal closed period. From September 15th to September 25th and between October 31st and the last day of February no commercial salmon fishing was permitted. As well, the weekly closed period was extended by 6 hours beginning at 6am Saturday and ending 6pm Sunday (Fisheries Regulation Order, 1894).

b) Regulations Institutionalizing and Reducing the Indian Reserve Army of Labour

Amendments to the Fisheries Regulations in 1892 lifted the restriction on the number of licenses which could be issued to independent fishermen but retained the limit of twenty attached licenses per cannery (British Columbia Fisheries Commission,

1892:x-xi). This had little effect in shifting the balance of power away from the canners and towards the independent fishermen. As discussed above, twenty licenses per canner were sufficient to ensure that the canners could control the supply and price of fish through the use of wage and share fishermen.

However, in 1898 the Department of Marine and Fisheries attempted to introduce a new set of licensing regulations to address the issue of the imbalance of power between canners and fishermen. The draft regulations proposed to reduce the number of licenses available to the canners from twenty to ten. Furthermore, the new regulations called for the annual registration of fishermen by the 30th of April. Each license was to be valid for only one fisherman, either a British subject or an Indian, whose name was enrolled in the registry and appeared on the license. Proof of Canadian citizenship would entail the presentation of a tax receipt. Boat-pullers permits and registration, for a \$1 fee, were also to be required (Amendment to B.C. Fisheries Regulations, 1898).

The effect of the new regulations would be to reduce both the pool of labour that the canners could draw upon and to reduce the size of the attached fishing labour force. Registration meant that the potential labour force had been reduced from all resident, British subjects to just those who had registered by the 30th day of April. Compulsory registration would also reduce the flexibility the canners had enjoyed with their attached workers. Attached licenses could not now be transferred between workers according to management priorities. The canners would

have less control over their workforce. Cannerymen, Indians and the Department of Indian Affairs all objected to the draft regulations.

Cannerymen in the industry objected vigorously to two provisions. They opposed both the reduction in the number of licenses allotted to them and the registration of fishermen. They argued that these regulations would reduce their ability to compete with American cannerymen and would increase the cost of canning fish. The regulations, by reducing the control of the cannerymen over their labour force would:

"...tend to throw the whole industry into the hands of the the fishermen and place them in a position to dictate what shall be paid for the fish and to close down the industry at any moment...". (Board of Trade, 1899).

The cannerymen argued against pre-registration, claiming that this provision would disenfranchise a large percentage of the work force. Many of those who fished during the season, they argued, were engaged otherwise during the rest of the year and would not be free to pre-register. One canneryman was particularly concerned about how the draft regulations would affect his supply of Indian labour:

"A number of these are Indians who come from the Coast, a long distance from the fishing grounds, and are not likely to be here to register on the 1st May. In addition these Indians do not pay taxes, and consequently cannot produce a tax receipt." (Willson, 1899)

In opposition to the reduction in the number of licenses allotted to cannerymen, they argued that Indians would be denied the opportunity to fish. They argued that many Indians presently engaged in the fishery did not have their own boats and gear but

depended upon the canneries to supply them. If the canneries had no licenses to fish they could not hire Indians and they would become indigent, wards of the State (B.C. Salmon Cannery, 1898).

The B.C. Salmon Packers Association claimed that the draft regulations would have the effect of excluding the majority of white fishermen from the fishery, that all Indians would be debarred and that the industry would be controlled by a small number of resident Fraser River fishermen (B.C. Salmon Packers Association, 1898). The canners threatened to shut down their operations if the regulations were not modified to their satisfaction (Ottawa Journal, 1899).

Indian fishermen also objected to the draft regulations. They were seen both as a threat to their livelihoods and as an infringement of their traditional right to participate freely in the commercial fishery. Objecting to both the requirement to register as boatmen and boatpullers and the fee for so registering the Kitamaat Indians of Douglas Channel petitioned the government to exempt them from the regulations.

"We think we have the prior right to fish in these waters. According to our old custom such right was hereditary these fishing grounds were held by our forefathers for generations; hence when the Government has taken our fishing grounds we think it only right it should not impose a tax on us when we are employed as fishermen at the various canneries." (Kitamaat Indians, 1898).

They argued that the effect of the draft regulations would be to deprive them of their fishing rights because they would be unable to attend in person to register. As well, they were neither able to show tax receipts nor could they afford to pay further license fees. They saw these new regulations as one part of a systematic

program to usurp their rights to the resources they formerly owned.

"...little by little we feel we are losing everything we formerly possessed. The lands which were our hunting grounds are being settled by strangers and the fur-bearing animals driven from the vicinity...And now it appears we are to be deprived of the right to fish at canneries except that we first register; obtain a license; and show receipts for taxes..." (Kitamaat Indians, 1898)

The Department of Marine and Fisheries also received a petition from the Skeena, Naas and Rivers Inlets peoples asking that they too be exempted from registration (Maxwell, 1898).

The Department of Indian Affairs expressed concern about two aspects of the regulations. The reduction to ten from twenty cannery licenses was predicted to "...disastrously affect the Indians..." because it would restrict the canners ability to hire them. They also requested that Indians be exempted from presenting a tax receipt as proof of citizenship (Department of Indian Affairs, 1899).

Professor Prince, the Fisheries Commissioner, defended the draft regulations to his Minister. He argued that the regulations were necessary to redress the imbalance in power which existed between the canners and the contract fishermen.

"The regulations have in the past been neither harsh nor injurious to canners. They have been onesided and unfair to the fishermen." (Prince, 1899a)

Prince attributes the opposition of the canners to the fact that the new regulations will return some rights to independent fishermen in the industry (Prince, 1899b).

His Minister, however, was not convinced. He complained to one of his colleagues that the draft regulations had given him

"...no end of trouble..." (Minister of Marine and Fisheries, 1899b). Initially the draft regulations were to be introduced in 1898, however the magnitude of the opposition caused their implementation to be postponed until 1899 (Minister of Marine and Fisheries, 1899a). In the meantime the Minister amended them to meet some of the objections of his critics. According to Prince the new regulations, introduced in 1899 and 1900, while addressing some of the canners complaints, "...reduced the stringency and effectiveness of the original regulations..." (Prince, undated:b).

The Minister retained the reduction in attached licenses, limiting the canners to ten each, however the registration provisions were relaxed. The period of pre-registration was extended until June 30th. More importantly though, the Minister excluded Indian fisherman from the registration provisions. The new Regulations specified that each of the ten attached company licenses had to be fished by either a registered fisherman, "...or shall be valid for and used only by an 'Indian'". Likewise, while all boatmen and boat-pullers had to be licensed, Indians were exempted (New Fishing Regulations for B.C., 1900).

The effect of the 1900 Regulations was to institutionalize the labour of Indian fishermen as a 'generic' reserve army of labour and to reduce this pool of labour to half its former size. It is also during this period, 1898-1900, that the number of Indian fishermen in the industry was drastically reduced (see Appendix A: Table 6). In response to the reduction of attached licenses the canners increased the use of contract Japanese

fishermen. These expatriate fishermen would fish for low pay and became an important source of labour.

To conclude, it is clear that one of the most important mechanisms of 'primitive accumulation' in the B.C. salmon industry was the progressive application of the Dominion Fisheries Regulations to the salmon resource. These regulations performed the two principle tasks of 'primitive accumulation'.

Through regulation the state transformed the salmon resource from property owned collectively by Indian people into private property which could be accumulated as capital. The state progressively restricted the access of Indian people to the salmon resource, while at the same time allowing capitalist interests greater and greater control over the resource.

Through its regulation of the salmon resource the State also effectively transformed Indian fishermen from independent producers into a capitalist labour force. The introduction of restrictions on the methods and technologies which could be used and the times and places where subsistence fishing could occur restricted the productivity of the native food fishery. This had the effect of increasing Indian peoples dependence upon incomes generated through participation in the capitalist commercial fishery for their means of subsistence.

By differentiating between 'subsistence' and 'commercial' salmon the State also denied entrance to the commercial industry on terms familiar to and available to Indian people. In order to fish commercially Indian people were obliged to participate in the industry on capital's terms, as wage labourers or 'attached'

fishermen. In effect these regulations helped to shape the potential pool of Indian labour into a proletariat, a form of labour which capitalists in the industry required.

As we have seen the response of Indian people to the creation of a commercial salmon industry was pragmatic. They worked in the industry when they could earn relatively good incomes. When incomes were low or non-existent they went on strike for higher incomes or avoided the industry, concentrating on subsistence production or looking for other work. In marked contrast to their attitudes towards opportunities for work afforded by the industry were the responses of Indian people to the alienation of their resource. Throughout the period under discussion Indian people maintained that they had unalienable, hereditary rights of ownership to the salmon resource. As far as they were concerned these rights included the capture and use of salmon both for subsistence and commercial purposes. Indian people actively and vigorously defended these rights. In order to enforce its fishing regulations and protect the capital invested in the fishery the State was compelled to use force or the threat of force. Resistance by Indian people had some positive effects. In the north the Tsimshian were able to avoid licensing restriction and the payment of licensing fees and the fear of a generalized Indian resurrection was responsible, at least in part, for an easing of restrictions on subsistence fishing.

CHAPTER FIVE: INDIAN LABOUR AND RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

The salmon canners met their demand for labour by recruiting workers for the fishery and processing plants from the large native Indian population. This was achieved through a mixture of attraction and coercion. On the one hand the fishing and canning work offered employment and income generating opportunities. On the other hand, competition from the commercial industry and other Europeans in their traditional economic pursuits, as well as restrictions upon subsistence fishing rights were limiting the ability of Indian people to make their livings in a traditional fashion.

Government regulation of the fishery during the latter decades of the nineteenth century sharply distinguished between salmon caught for subsistence purposes and for commercial purposes. These regulations created two fisheries, a subsistence fishery permitting only the use of a limited number of traditional technologies and a commercial fishery permitting only the use of limited number of capitalist technologies.

In this chapter I argue that in order to participate in the commercial industry many Indian people had to do so on capital's terms. Participation in the commercial fishery required capital that many Indian people did not have. It required the acquisition of a licence, a boat, nets, gear and a grub stake. Lacking their own capital many Indian fishermen became a part of an 'attached' pool of labour fishing for wages or shares or canning for wages or by piece work. The canners used this pool

of labour, drawing upon it when needed, in order to keep the general price of labour as low as possible.

From the point of view of the cannery owners Indian labour played a particularly useful role in the salmon fishing and canning industry. The labour of Indian men, women and children was used to alleviate both absolute and relative shortages of labour. Indian people provided their labour power when no other source was available and the cannery owners used a pool of Indian labour to generally reduce the cost of canning salmon. Within the industry a particular set of relations of production developed which allowed Indian labour to be used in this manner.

Relations of production in the industry prior to the turn of the century are most comprehensively described in testimony before the 1892 Royal Commission on the British Columbia Fishery. This is the principal source for the description which follows. While this source - verbatim testimony of fishermen, cannery owners, merchants and government officials - provides many insights into the relations of production which governed work in the industry, it is flawed in a number of respects. Most importantly, the viewpoints of Indian people are largely underrepresented in the testimony. Only two native persons testified before the Commission, both of whom resided in the South. This means that our understanding of Indian labour must be constructed through the perceptions of observers rather than participants. We have little information about how Indian people themselves saw the role of their labour in the industry. Secondly, the interests of southern as opposed to northern

fishermen and owners, are over-represented. The Commission's hearings were held in the south, in Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria, and Nanaimo. Testimony dealing directly with the Skeena/Naas region was heard from three men, two cannery-owners: A.J. McClellan on the Naas and W.H. Dempster on the Skeena, and a former resident and trader in the area, one William Green. As well, the northern industry was discussed by a number of other fishermen and owners whose testimony dealt primarily with the south. With these biases noted, the way in which the creation of an Indian labour force shaped fishing and canning relations of production will be discussed below.

The salmon industry was characterized by both an ethnic and a sexual division of labour. Indian women, boys and girls, and Chinese men worked inside the canneries (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892: 23-24, 40, 81). They performed the work of preparing and canning the fish. These canning operations were supervised by a handful of foremen. Foremen were almost exclusively white men, though Chinese foremen are also mentioned in some accounts and in some cases Indian labour contractors could be found supervising the labourers they had recruited (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892: 23-24, 178; Knight, 1978: 89).

Workers inside the canneries were either paid wages or by piece work. Indian women are reported to have been paid one dollar per day in one cannery and ten or twelve and a half cents an hour in others (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892: 17, 179). Inside workers were often hired through a labour contractor (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892: 275). In that case, the contractor,

often Chinese or Indian, would receive a set price per case of salmon his workers packed. In turn the workers would be paid by the contractor. In one case reported to the Commission a Chinese contractor received approximately 50 to 70 cents a case, or about one cent a can. The Indian women he employed were paid out of his piece rate (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:178). According to one cannery owner, days wages or piece work worked out to the same return on labour for the worker (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:179). In the north, McClellan, by his own report, paid higher wages to the Indian women who worked in his cannery. They earned between one and two dollars for a days work (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:287).

Fishermen were largely white, Indian or Japanese males, although Indian and Japanese women are also reported to have fished alongside their husbands (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:12; Knight, 1978).

In the salmon fishery there were two principal relationships between labour and the cannery owners. Independent fishermen fished on contract, and 'attached' fishermen fished on shares or for wages. These relationships varied in the amount of resources a fishermen would have to possess, the degree of control the cannery owners had over their fishermen, and the remuneration a fishermen could expect for his labour. Cannery owners attempted to balance the numbers of independent and 'attached' fishermen in order to achieve the greatest control over their labour force, to maximize the productivity of their fishing fleet, and to minimize the cost of securing an adequate supply of fish.

a) Salmon Fishing Licences

During the later part of the 19th century the government attempted to allocate the stock of salmon and generate income for the government by instituting a licensing system. In order to catch salmon commercially a fisherman had to have a licence issued by the Department of Marine and Fisheries.

Two types of licences were issued. 'Inside' licences were issued to each of the canneries. The canneries could use them to hire waged fishermen to fish cannery boats. Alternatively, they could be 'loaned' to fishermen to fish by 'shares'. In this case the fishermen and the cannery split or shared the fishermen's catch. 'Outside' licences were issued directly to fishermen. These fishermen contracted to supply the canneries with fish using their own boat, licence and gear.

Licensing evolved in three stages prior to the advent of the 20th century. Initially, prior to 1889, the government issued an unlimited number of licences. One to each of the fishermen who requested it, and could afford to pay for it, and as many as the canneries felt they needed. Beginning in 1889 the government restricted the number of licences it issued. In that year a quota of five hundred licences was assigned to the Fraser River. Cannerymen on the river were allotted twenty licences each (to a maximum of 350) and the remainder were available to independent fishermen. In 1892, the government once again changed the licensing regulations. The number of licences available to canneries remained restricted at twenty each. However, on the

recommendation of the the British Columbia Fisheries Commission, all bona fide fishermen, being British subjects and residents of British Columbia were eligible for one commercial salmon fishing licence on the payment of a \$20 licensing fee.

b) Contract Fishermen

Contract fishermen maintained the greatest independence from the cannery owners. These fishermen owned their own gear - nets and boats - and fished under their own independent licences. Their relationship with the canneries was a contractual one; the fishermen contracted to supply fish at a certain price per fish and the cannery agreed to buy them at this price. As far as the fishermen were concerned this was the most lucrative way in which to fish (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:132,47). Unlike those fishing by shares or for wages, contract fishermen could make enough money during the fishing season to live on year round (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:92).

While they could expect to make the most money, contract fishermen were also required to have the most resources on hand. Boats cost between \$50 and \$60 and nets, which only lasted one season, were as much as \$90. The total outfit for a fisherman, was reported to be approximately between \$150 and \$175 (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:143). On top of the expense of the fishing gear was the cost of the licence. In 1892, licences on the Fraser river went for \$20 per season and on the Skeena and Naas \$5 per season (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:94).

In general contract fishermen were considered more productive than fishermen employed in other ways (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:151). As they were paid a set price per fish their incomes depended upon the quantity of fish they could deliver to the canneries. In comparison, E.A. Wadhams, a cannery owner on the Fraser, opined that his waged fishermen were "...more apt to knock off when they consider they have done a good days work" (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:166). However, James Laidlaw argued that the productivity gap between waged and contracted fishermen could be closed simply by working the cannery boats 24 hours per day (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:193).

Withstanding their independence, contract fishermen were preferred by the canners. The ambivalence of the canners is summarized in one canner's testimony:

"It is just this way: the canners prefer having good contract fishermen to any other system so long as we can feel secure ourselves." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:40)

The contract fishermen were a privileged minority within the fishery. They owned their own boats and gear, held their own licences, and made relatively good incomes.[1] Contract fishermen were largely white and for the most part fished on the Fraser river.

Those unable to acquire their own licences or without capital for boat and gear were forced to fish on shares or for wages using cannery licences and equipment. The restriction of

1. See also: Ralston (1965:45) for a discussion of the privileged status of the contract fisherman.

independent licences was one way in which the canneries were able to control their fishing labour. As one fisherman put it:

"I could not get a licence myself and was forced to take just whatever the canners like to give. I have my own boat and net and have been raised a fisherman."
(B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:70)

c) Fishing on 'Shares' or for Wages

Those fishermen without their own licences or other resources fished either by 'shares' or on wages. Those fishermen with some capital - usually their own boat or nets - fished by share. In most cases the canners hired Indians to fish the cannery boats on wages and Europeans were given an opportunity to fish by share (Ralston, 1965:45).

Fishing on shares took a number of different forms depending upon which means of production the fishermen was lacking. In general though the canneries supplied that fishermen with some combination of licence, boat and gear. In return, the cannery would get a 'share' of the catch or pay a reduced price for the fish.

In many cases the canner supplied everything - boat, net and licence. Usually the fisherman and the canneries split the catch 50/50. Either the canner would get half the fish for free and pay full price for the rest or pay half price for them all (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:40-41). Some canners were less generous. Marshall English, representing two northern and nine southern canneries to the Commission, reported that he paid fishermen with outside licences 12 and 1/2 cents to 15 cents per

fish and those with inside licences 6 and 1/2 cents a fish (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:143).[2]

Incomes for fishermen on shares were generally low. Low incomes were the penalty that fishermen had to pay for having neither means of production nor direct access to the resource. Samuel Davie, a white fisherman, described his situation to the Commission in the following terms:

"I may say I have been working for the cannerymen and have been treated very unkindly by them. I only got 10 cents for my fish, whereas the man who has got his own licence and boat gets 20 cents, but this last season I only got 6 1/2 cents, the rest being taken off for to pay for the boat and net. This only leaves 3 1/4 for myself and my partner." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:61)

Because the canners directly controlled some part of their means of production fishermen working for shares were more directly under their control than the contract fishermen (Gladstone, 1959:58-59).

The waged fisherman was the least independent type of fisherman and until the mid 1890's this was the most common way of commercial fishing (Knight, 1978:85). He fished using the canner's licence, boat and gear at the canners pleasure. Most of the Indians in the fishery fished for wages and while waged fishermen were not exclusively Indian, Indians were the largest ethnic group among the waged fishermen (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:142, 162, 164).

2. Other arrangements between fishermen and canners resulted in 'sharing' relationships. For example, ten Indians of the Musquam Indian band were reported to be fishing for the Fraser river canners. They supplied their own boats and licences but received their nets from the cannery (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:132).

Waged fishermen were paid either daily or monthly. Daily wages ranged between \$1.25 and \$2.00. In 1892, ten Indians of the Musquam band were reported to making \$2.00 per day as net-men and \$1.50 per day as boat-pullers (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:130). McTiernan, an Indian agent at New Westminster, reported to the Commission that while a few Fraser river Indians made between \$600-\$800 fishing with licences those who worked for wages made between \$1.25 and \$1.50 per day (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:47).[3] McClellan paid his Indians fishing on the Naas a monthly wage, \$40 or \$45 (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:287).

Wages varied from year to year and from cannery to cannery but without fail they were low. James Wise, a fisherman, told the Commission that those without licences "...are under the thumb of men who only give small pay..." and Indian agent McTiernan complained to the Commission that in contrast to Indians with licences, "...those who have not come home with purely nothing" (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:47).

Many canneries paid their workers in kind, supplying them with a 'grub stake' at the beginning of the season which was to be paid back in fish. As well, nearly all the canneries had stores attached which supplied the men with provisions throughout the season (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:179). At least one cannery owner was able to lucratively combine storekeeping with managing his cannery. In the spring of 1894, G. Walters, a

3. See also: Lawrence (1951:65). According to him, those Indians on the Fraser with independent licences could expect to make between \$600-\$1000 per season, while those on attached licences would make \$2 per day and come home penniless.

fisherman on the Skeena, complained to the Department of Marine and Fisheries that a cannery owner at Port Essington, J. Cunningham, hired only Indian labour. Walters claimed that Cunningham could get Indian labour cheaper than white labour because they would accept payment in his own 'script'. This 'script' was redeemable only at his store. According to Walters, Cunningham was able to recover most of the wages he paid out by inflating the price of his merchandise (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:97).

d) Attached Fishermen and the Price of Fish

The allocation of licences to the canneries was of crucial importance in determining the price of fish. Inside licences allowed the canneries access to the fish resource independent of fishermen with outside licences. In turn this allowed the canneries a large degree of flexibility in their negotiations with independent fishermen over the price of fish.

Two other factors were of importance in determining the conditions under which the price of fish was negotiated. First, the size of the runs of salmon was variable. When the runs were large and the fish abundant and easy to catch in large quantities the price was reduced. When the runs were small and fish were scarce the price increased. The cannery owners were able to use the fishermen they controlled to counteract or at least modify the law of supply and demand. When fish were scarce and the price was high they sent out their waged Indian fishermen. This had the effect of reducing the price of fish to the wage bill and the

competition from waged fishermen forced the price of 'independent' fish down. When fish were abundant and prices were low, waged fishermen could be drawn in.

Second, fishermen on the Fraser, Skeena and Naas rivers formed associations and trade unions and went on strike for higher fish prices. In July of 1893 the Fraser River Fishermen's Protective and Benevolent Association went on strike to demand a standard price for the season, union recognition and the exclusion of foreign workers (Forester, 1975:22). Two Indian chiefs are reported to have been leaders of the strike. However, McKervill (1967:62) reports that the strike failed and the association disbanded in part due to the failure of Japanese, Chinese, Whites and Indians to cooperate.

Northern fishermen organized more effectively the next year. Naas and Skeena River Indians refused to fish for the canneries for 5 cents per fish rather than 6 cents per fish as formerly (Gaudin, 1894c). White and Japanese fishermen joined with the Indian fishermen and solidarity between the three groups helped the strike to be won (DIA Annual Report, 1895:163). Gladstone (1959:246) makes note of two subsequent strikes in the Skeena area. One in 1896 over fish prices and another in 1897 over cannery wages. No other details are available.

The canners played off one ethnic groups against the other in negotiations over prices and wages and the maintenance of labour solidarity among these groups was always problematic. Indian fishermen are reported to have united with the White fishermen in attempts to exclude the Japanese from the fishing

grounds. Gladstone (1959:119) and Forester (1975:25) attribute the determination and commitment of Indian fishermen to this cause to their belief in fishing as an aboriginal right and their fear of displacement by the Japanese.

Ethnic conflict played a major role in the Fraser River fishermen's strike of 1900. White and Indian fishermen struck over the price of fish. The canners offered 20 cents and the fishermen demanded 25 cents (Lawrence, 1951:76-77). The strike failed when the Japanese fishermen fished under the protection of the military for the canner's price. The Indian fishermen are reported to have remained firm in their determination not to fish (Forester, 1975:26). Later, in 1904, Indian fishermen struck for higher prices on the Skeena. The strike was lost. Indian fishermen refused to fish for the canners price and went south to work on the Fraser. However, the Japanese fishermen are reported to have stayed and fished (Ross, 1967:69).

In response to the organization and independence of the 'outside' fishermen and the variability of the salmon runs the canners attempted to control as many 'inside' fishermen as possible. One method of controlling fishermen was by controlling licences. Canners saw control over these as their means of being independent of the contract fishermen. Henry Bell-Irving, chairman of the Anglo-British Packing Company, argued in favour of allocating licences to the canners:

"I should think it would be sheer robbery to deprive the canners of the licences that have recently been given to the canners. I think you might as well take timber limits and hand them over to the loggers as take licences from the canners. The welfare of fishermen is of considerable account to canners, they wish to treat

them well, but do not want to be entirely at the mercy of the fishermen." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:328)

E.A. Wadhams, a cannery owner, also argued in support of the interests of the canners. He proposed that access to 'independent' licences should be restricted. According to him cannery owners were opposed to all Indian and white fishermen having their own licences. If the licensing of 'independent' fishermen was unrestricted he argued, fish prices would become too expensive for the canners (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:164).

According to the independent fishermen, the problem with cannery licences was that they deprived fisherman of their livelihood. In good years the canners could supply all their resource needs with their own boats (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:67). The result was that they became monopolists, able to dictate rather than negotiate the price of fish. Charles Stanley, a fisherman, pointed out to the Commission the threat that cannery licences presented to the contract fishermen.

"No wonder they want 25 licences, they could do without us all, and in big years not half those licences would they want." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:409)

It was in the interest of the contract fishermen that licences for canners should be as restricted as much as possible. One fisherman argued before the Commission that the canners should not get any licences at all. As a result he argued, they would be unable to hire Indian fishermen, they would be forced to buy all their fish from independents, and the price of fish would rise (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:95). Another fisherman

questioned whether Indians should be allowed their own licences. He argued that because Indians rarely has the resources to pay for the licence and the fishing outfit, giving them licences was equivalent to giving them directly to the canners.

"...very few Indians - one in ten - have their own boats and nets. The canners pay the licence fee and the Indian goes and fishes for the cannery for whatever they like to pay him - so, this is like giving them to the canners." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:48)

●) Monopolization of Salmon Fishing Licences

A common practice, especially with Indian fishermen, was for the canneries to purchase the 'independent' or 'outside' licences for the fishermen. In some cases this worked like a loan.

"...some Indians have boats and nets of their own but not all of them and when they have not boats and nets the cannerymen - Mr. Munn and Mr. Ewen - and Mr. Laidlaw - gives them \$20 and supplies them with boat and net and when they get their money they pay them back." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:394)

More commonly however, canners applied for 'outside' licences using Indian names. The canners then added these licences to their stock of 'inside' licences and fished them on shares or for wages (Lawrence, 1951:74). In this way they were able to reduce the competition from truly independent contract fishermen. It was reported to the Commission that 60 of the 100 'outside' licences on the Skeena were actually purchased by the canneries using Indian names (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:15,27).

In the north, the majority of fishermen on the Skeena and Naas rivers were Indian, both those fishing 'inside' and 'outside' licences. In reality, however, no distinction could be

made between the two types.[4] The canners in the area purchased the 'outside' licences for the Indians they employed, using them as though they were inside licences (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:283,310).[5] On the Naas Fisheries officials allowed McClelland and the other canners to register all of the licences under their own names, both those allotted directly to them and those which would normally be considered as 'outside' licences (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:283). On the Skeena a similar arrangement was in force except that the canners applied for the 'outside' licences under Indian names (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:27). In effect these also belonged to the canners. Because they had been paid for by the canners fisheries officials refused to give them to Indians whose names were on them. They became part of the the pool of cannery licences and were fished by whomever the canners wanted. In fact, the canneries sometimes applied for the licences using bogus names or the names of dead men (Herring, 1894).

[V] REASONS FOR PREFERRING INDIAN LABOUR

The cannery owners preferred to employ Indian labour because as a group they helped to solve both the problems of an absolute and relative shortage of labour.

First, while control of salmon fishing licences permitted the canners access to the salmon resource independent of the

4. See also Gladstone (1959:60). The outside fishermen regarded themselves as employees of the canneries, regardless of the fact that technically they fished on independent licences.

5. See also Lawrence's (1951:74) discussion of attached Indian licences in the North.

'outside' fishermen the licences were useless to the canners without a supply of labour willing to fish for less than the independent 'outside' fishermen. This supply existed in the form of a large pool of Indian men. For the most part their lack of capital and the restriction of independent licences meant that if they wanted to fish they had to fish for the canners and accept a lower rate of remuneration.

Second, the wives and children of Indian fishermen provided a cheap and efficient source of labour inside the canneries. The canners regarded a supply of 'inside' fishing licences as essential in order to ensure an adequate supply of Indian labour to work inside the canneries (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:117).

"I am reasoning for a fixed number for each cannery, as our Indian labour must be given employment...We require a certain number of licences to encourage as much labour to come as possible, for what value are green fish unless you can use them and have labour to put them up with?" (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:40)

The promise of employment fishing on cannery licences was used to attract Indian men to the fishery. But as important as their labour was, it was the labour of their wives and children in the canneries themselves which the canners considered crucial.[6]

"The real reason that you want to have those boats of your own and get Indian fishermen as [sic] they bring their families around and you have Indian women and boys, and some of the men, not fishermen, to work in the canneries..." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:117)

6. In fact, Lawrence (1951:28) in his history of salmon canning in British Columbia notes that often an Indian fisherman would only be taken on to fish on shares because he had a "good canfilling or net-minding squaw".

Canners Munn, Ewen and Laidlaw gave virtually identical arguments to the Commission, relating the availability of 'inside' fishing licences to the attraction of Indian men and the supply of Indian women and children as cannery workers (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:40,117,189).

The cannery also preferred Indian labour because they were more flexible than other types of labour. The Indian men and boys would work either fishing or canning depending upon where their labour was needed the most (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:117,408). As Alexander Ewen pointed out this flexibility was important to the cannery as they attempted to pack as much fish in as short a time as possible.[7]

"I find now the Indians are only too willing to get in the cannery and work as long as there is work for them. We want to get everyone to work in the cannery during the run of fish as long as we can get fish, but if we cannot get fish we put them out to fish again." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:121).

The fact that Indians would often travel great distances to work for a short time was also 'appreciated' by the cannery. Marshall English, of the ABC Co., testified before the Commission that while he personally didn't think giving Indians too much money was a good idea, as a businessman his hands were tied. Asked why he employed Indians if he felt that way English replied:

"Because we have to - we cannot import labour from the east for one or two months only. These people come from all parts of the country and bring their

7. In such an ethnically and gender segregated industry - white foremen and engineers, white contract fishermen, Indian women and Chinese men cannery workers - the Indian men who would work fishing and canning for wages played a useful role as 'generic workers'.

belongings and fish for five or six weeks and then go home again - white people would not do this." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:142).

Most importantly, however, Indian labour was preferred over other types because it was cheap.[8] The philosophy of the canners regarding the wages they paid the men and women who worked for them was simple and straight forward. They employed those people who would work for the least amount of money. F.L. Lord, a cannery owner, who employed Indian women and Chinese men to work in his cannery told the Commission that in his opinion a "white man would starve to death" on the wages that he paid his workers (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:179). In this cannery the labour contractor paid his workers out of the 50 or 70 cents per case that Lord paid him. When Lord was asked, "...if any class would do it for 35 cents you would take legitimate work away from others for them?", he replied:

"Yes; we would all do that we would get it as cheap as possible." (B.C. Fisheries Commission, 1892:178)

[V1] LABOUR SHORTAGES AND INDIAN LABOUR.

As we have seen above the canners and the State used a number of strategies in order to produce an accessible, work habituated Indian work force which the canners could control. The canners then used their Indian labour forces as an 'attached' reserve army of labour in order to reduce the price of labour. These measures allowed for with the creation and expansion of a capitalist salmon industry.

8. Lawrence (1951:61) argued that the Indian population represented the ideal workforce for the canning industry for two reasons: one, they were located every place there was abundant salmon, and two, they were willing to work for low wages.

These strategies can be divided into two types according to the purpose which they were intended to achieve. First, the canners and the State took measures which encouraged the participation of Indians in the industry. The Department of Indian Affairs, through its agents, took an active role in recruiting Indian men and women to work in the industry. As well they established industrial schools where trades necessary to the fishing industry were taught and work discipline was inculcated.

The canners, for their part, located their plants near or on Indian village sites and associated their establishments with particular populations by routinely recruiting workers from the same villages or regions.

For Indian peoples such as the Tsimshian, the salmon fishing industry quickly became their most important source of cash income. It was combined with more traditional forms of subsistence production in order to maximize their incomes.

Second, the canners and the State introduced measures which shaped the participation of Indian peoples in such a way that the interests of capital were served. They restricted independent access to the salmon resource and increased the canners control over their workforce.

For a period of time this goal was achieved by regulating and licencing the resource and restricting access of Indian people to it. Just as important however was the capitalization of the salmon industry. Commercial fishing came to require the possession of monetary resources which few Indian people had. The cost of nets, boats, licencing, and other miscellaneous

provisions was prohibitive to independent entry into the industry for many Indian people. They became an 'attached' labour force dependent upon the canners for the means to participate in the commercial salmon industry.

In Chapters Two and Three above we have seen how the capitalization of the salmon industry and the demand by capital for labour led capitalists and the State to actively create an Indian labour force. In Chapter Four we saw how the restriction of native subsistence and commercial fishing rights also served to 'encourage' the entry of and shape the participation of Indians in the commercial salmon industry. The restriction of native fishing rights through regulation separated native producers from their means of production. This served the two principle goals of 'primitive accumulation'. First, it served to transfer ownership of the salmon resource from Indian people to the State and from the State to capital. The salmon resource became commoditized and could now be owned as capital and enter the capitalist production process. Second, it helped to produce an Indian work force for the salmon industry by restricting means of access to the salmon resource other than by working for capital.

As we have seen in Chapter Five the canners used this newly created supply of Indian labour in a way which best served their interests. Indian fishermen, prohibited from engaging in commercial fishing using traditional techniques and lacking the resources to enter the industry independently, became part on an

'attached' labour force. This labour force was dependent upon and controlled by the canners.

We have also seen that the degree of control which the canners could exercise over their 'attached' fishermen also depended upon other factors. Indians in the north brought resources other than capital to their work sites. The strength of their conviction that the resource by right belonged to them, their organization in closely knit communities and their strength in numbers as well as their resolve to use force when reasoning and negotiation failed gave the Tsimpshian a greater degree of freedom from the regulation of State and capital.

Chapter Six: Conclusion: Primitive Accumulation, the B.C. Salmon Industry and Indian Labour

This thesis has attempted to accomplish two tasks. First, to present the development of early capitalism in British Columbia's salmon industry as an example of the process of 'primitive accumulation'. Second, to understand the role of native Indian labour in the development of the salmon industry as one aspect of this process of 'primitive accumulation'.

As Marx and others have defined it 'primitive accumulation' is the process which transforms resources and labour into a form that capitalist production can use. Marx has argued that the basic form which this process takes is the separation of producers from their means of production. When the access of producers to their means of production is restricted they are compelled to sell their labour-power in order to make their living. In this way wage labourers are created. The separation of indigenous producers from their means of production transforms resources into private property. These resources become the commodities which capital uses as means of production. The separation of producers from their means of production is an ongoing process, one which continues until capitalist production has developed to the point where the necessary factors of production are created in the normal course of capitalist reproduction.

In the case of the salmon industry, two important factors of production, labour-power and the salmon resource, did not pre-exist in commodity form. However, the potential for these commodities existed in the form of a large native Indian

population and their means of subsistence. In the case of the salmon industry, primitive accumulation meant the separation of indigenous producers from their means of production, the salmon resource.

The development of the salmon industry created a large demand for these two commodities. Between 1880 and 1890 the industry experienced 'boom and bust' development, the rapid expansion and contraction of canning capacity. Consequently the demand for labour also fluctuated, though over the period employment in the industry increased. In the later period, between 1890 and 1900, development occurred even more rapidly and with less fluctuation. There was a large increase in the employment of fishermen and shoreworkers.

At the inception of the industry and until well into the 1880's the majority of workers in the salmon industry were Indian people. By the end of the nineteenth century Indian fishermen had been largely displaced, though Indian women remained a significant minority of the inside cannery workers. In the course of the development of the salmon industry the coastal Indian population of B.C. became a pool of labour-power for the industry which the canners called upon or dismissed according to the priorities of capital accumulation.

By the end of the nineteenth century the salmon canneries were packing and selling over a million cases of salmon a year. In effect the salmon resource had largely become the private property of the cannery owners.

[1] LABOUR AS A COMMODITY

At the inception of the industry the coastal native Indian population was the only readily available source of labour for the industry. Indian people lived in close proximity to the salmon resource and were therefore available to work at all the locations where canning factories were erected. Their expertise on the water and in capturing the salmon equipped them with the skills that the canners required of their fishermen. Their access to subsistence production allowed them to survive the cyclical and seasonal fluctuations of the industry and most importantly permitted the canners to pay low wages. These factors initially led the canners to recruit their labour force from the native settlements near the salmon supply.

In the course of the development of the industry the canners transformed this pool of labour into a form useful to capital in the industry. For the most part, Indian women and children were employed for wages or on piece rate in the canning factories and Indian men became an 'attached' fishing labour force. As waged or 'shares' fishermen they were controlled by the canners and used as a reserve army of labour in order to lower the price of fish.

a) The Creation of an Indian Labour Force

The willingness of Indian people to work for low wages in the salmon canneries and fishery must be explained by a combination of factors which both compelled them to enter the industry and attracted them to the work. Underlying the participation of Indian people in the industry was the disruption

of their more or less traditional economic activities through the progressive usurpation of resources by the state and capital.

The competition between whites and Indians for the resources of B.C. reduced the productivity of traditional Indian economies and made it necessary for them to search for alternate economic opportunities. Especially important in this process was the usurpation of the salmon resource by the state and capital. The growth of the commercial industry made heavy demands on the salmon resource. Canneries were located on traditional fishing sites and fishing operations disrupted and helped to deplete the native food fishery. Indian groups from all over the province complained of the conflict between their fishery and the commercial fishery. As well, traditional hunting, fishing and gathering rights were being threatened by competition from white settlers. The concept of 'Crown lands' undermined traditional property rights held by native families and communities.

After the application of the Fisheries Act to British Columbia in 1877, the commercial and subsistence rights of Indians were progressively limited. Subsistence production became a privilege granted by the state rather than an aboriginal right of Indian people. The use of spears, weirs, and drift nets was prohibited outright. Limitations on rights of access and on the types of technologies which could be used reduced the productivity of the native food fishery. By regulating access to the salmon resource the state usurped ownership of the resource. Commercial interests were then allowed preferential access and

these interests were most carefully considered when regulations were formulated.

Participation in the salmon industry supplemented incomes generated by traditional economic activities and provided a new way of making a living when the traditional economy was threatened. Many Indians were able to fit work in the salmon industry into their traditional round of seasonal economic activities. They continued to hunt and fish for themselves and supplemented their incomes with wage work. When wage work was not available extra energy was spent on subsistence production. They became a seasonal and part-time proletariat. Incomes generated in the salmon industry came to replace those which had been lost in the fur industry due to low prices and increased competition.

The participation of Indians in the commercial fishery was shaped by state regulation and by the capitalist nature of the fishery. Native Indians were deemed to have no special commercial rights in the fishery. They were subject to all the rules and regulations which applied to commercial fishermen in general. By outlawing the use of traditional fishing techniques in the commercial fishery Indians were forced to enter the industry on capital's terms. Lack of resources prevented many Indian men from acquiring capitalist means of production - fishing boats, nets and other gear - through any other means than by placing their labour-power under the control of the cannery. Having gained control over this pool of labour-power the cannery used their control to assert their interests over the interests

of the independent fishermen. Testimony before the 1892 Royal Commission on the B.C. Fishery clearly shows that the 'attached' fishermen were used by the canners in the struggle with the independent fishermen over the price of fish.

The restriction of subsistence rights and the enforcement of regulations demarcating the subsistence and the commercial fisheries were not passively accepted by Indian people. Throughout the period under discussion Indian people asserted their right to fish both for the purpose of providing their families with food and for commercial purposes. Their resistance included petitioning and meeting with government officials, violations of fisheries regulations by refusing to purchase licences and fishing illegally, the interception of cannery fish boats in their waters, arming themselves, and participating in strikes over wages and piece rates. The response of the state was to enforce its fishing regulations and protect the interests of capital through the use of force if necessary.

Certain characteristics of the Indian population which made it suitable as a source of labour for the salmon industry also made it less manageable as a labour force. Unlike other ethnic populations in the industry Indian people had direct access to other subsistence resources. Though this access was restricted over the period it was not totally eliminated. As a result Indian people were better prepared to participate in and support strikes in the industry. Other groups such as Chinese or Japanese immigrants would have been less able to provide for themselves and their families for long durations without work.

As well, Indian people's strong sense of aboriginal title to the salmon and their relatively large populations in remote locations made them a formidable opposition when dealing with cannery managers and government officials.

There were other disadvantages to the system of 'attached' fishermen besides the relative independence of the Indian workforce. Waged fishermen were reported to be less productive than independent fishermen, piece rates provided a greater incentive to productivity than wages. In contrast to the 'attached' fishermen the independent fishermen supplied all their own capital. They supplied and maintained their own boats and nets and paid their own license fees.

b) The Displacement of Indian Fishermen

The labour of Indian men, women and children was in high demand, at least during periods of economic expansion, until the later half of the 1890's. However, Indian and to some extent white fishermen were partially displaced during the last years of the twentieth century.

The displacement of Indian fishermen can largely be attributed to the adoption, by the canners, of a new strategy to control costs. New sources of labour, immigrants from Japan and other countries, introduced a new means of reducing the price of labour-power. After 1892, the state allowed unlimited licensing of independent fishermen. The result was a rapid increase in the number of fishermen and increasing competition between these independent fishermen for fish and markets. This competition tended to reduce the price of fish to the minimum. While

competition between the independent fishermen led to the formation of trade unions, the exclusion of Japanese fishermen and their willingness to work for lower wages than either Indians or whites undercut the effectiveness of strikes. With the increased number of and competition between independent fishermen and the use of cheap Japanese fishing labour the importance of 'attached' Indian fishing labour declined.

High levels of immigration to British Columbia after 1890 created a capitalist labour market. A relative oversupply of labour ensured that competition between workers would provide a readily available supply of cheap labour-power for the canners. This enabled the canners to reduce the size of their 'attached', and relatively inefficient, workforce. In part the canners moved away from the 'attached' system and in part they simply replaced Indian fishermen with cheaper Japanese fishermen. In the north, where a small population and an isolated location restricted the development of a capitalist labour market, the 'attached' system remained important until the 1920's (Knight, 1978:82).

The Fishery Regulations of 1899 and 1900 reduced the size of the 'attached' labour force. While the canners objected to the removal of any of their prerogatives they settled for an extended registration period for independent fishermen, and the exclusion of Indians from the requirement to register as 'attached' license holders. The canners were left with a diminished but still viable 'attached' fishing force, should they need it.

The fact that Indian salmon resources continued to be usurped and access to this means of subsistence was further restricted even after the greatest demand for Indian labour was over suggests that these measures served some other purpose than simply the production of an Indian wage labour force.

Rolf Knight (1978:265) argues that the restriction of native access to Crown resources was not a conscious or systematic attempt to proletarianize Indian people. However, restrictions were introduced whenever a conflict arose between the needs of particular capitalists or groups of capitalists and Indian groups. It was the interests and actions of individual capitalists, for example Cunningham on the Skeena, which came into conflict with the rights of Indians in the area. This understanding of the process of primitive accumulation has the advantage of not reifying it or making capitalist development abstract. The process of proletarianization which took place among Indian peoples was not so much a conscious policy of the state but rather an unintended, but welcome, consequence of capitalist development, that is the expansion of individual capitals and the realization of the interests of individual capitalists.

The canners and the merchants in the salmon industry lobbied the government to promote the development of their industry. In order to promote this form of development the state was obliged to transform the salmon resource into private property which could be controlled by capital. This was achieved through state

regulation which effectively transferred ownership of the resource from Indian people to the canners.

Violent means were not necessary to produce a workforce for the industry. The economic alternatives which native producers faced meant that participation in the salmon industry made good economic sense. Such participation allowed them to "maximize" their incomes. They supplemented reduced incomes from less productive traditional economic pursuits.

Violent means were necessary to enforce restrictions on native fishing rights. The resistance of Indian people to the usurpation of their resources obliged the state to use violence or the threat of violence in order to protect the rights they had assigned to the commercial industry.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE ONE: EXPANSION OF CAPACITY

TOTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

YEAR	CANNERIES OPERATING[3]	CASES PACKED[1]	FISHERMEN/SHOREMEN[2]
1880	9	61849	77/ 635
1881	12	177176	1018/1198
1882	18	255061	1704/2230
1883	24	196292	1902/1901[4]
1884	17	141239	1195/1260[5]
1885	9	108517	1016/ 960
1886	17	161264	2225/2040
1887	20	204083	2223/2385
1888	21	184040	5454[6]
1889	28	414294	7050
1890	32	408978	7315
1891	26	314893	7554
1892	27	228470	6698
1893	37	590229	12392[7]
1894	32	494371	10915
1895	36	566395	12478
1896	47	601570	13853
1897	54	1015477	19850
1898	51	484161	20695
1899	68	765519[8]	18977

1 From Carrothers, 1941:15

2 Calculated from Department of Marine and Fisheries Annual Reports

3 From Carrothers, 1941:11

4 Includes licensed boats used in fishing for sale to canneries and fish markets.

5 Includes licensed boats used in fishing for sale to canneries and fish markets.

6 Fishermen and cannerymen not reported separately, 1888-1899.

7 Hands employed in connection with fishing in boats (excludes sealing and vessel crews) includes those curing and canning fish, 1893-1899.

8 Department of Marine and Fisheries Annual Report, 1900.

APPENDIX A

TABLE TWO: EXPANSION OF CAPACITY

SKEENA AND NASS REGION[1]

YEAR	CANNERIES OPERATING	CASES PACKED	FISHERMEN/SHOREMEN
1880	2	19694	50/100[2]
1881	3	29260	110/180
1882	5	45622	257/290
1883	8	58411	380/618
1884	7	72058	366/467
1885	2	12900	84/ 95
1886	4	45887	222/285
1887	5	58592	538/670
1888	6	82424	1393[3]
1889	6	78205	1809
1890	11	122345	1547[4][5]
1891	11	96172	2038
1892	12	124977	1934
1893	12	83454	2175
1894	11	88505	2102[6]
1895	11	89901	2860
1896	12	122912	2170[7]
1897	12	89531	2780
1898	12	110009	2665
1899	12	142345	2440

1 Calculated from: Department of Marine and Fisheries Annual Reports, 1881-1900.

2 1880-1887, employed by canneries.

3 1888-1889, number of men engaged using fishing boats, Rivers Inlet to Alaska boundary.

4 1890-1893, hands employed by canneries in connection with fishing

5 Including Lowe Inlet, 1890-1895.

6 1894-1895, number of men engaged using fishing boats, Rivers Inlet to Alaska boundary.

7 1896-1899, number of men engaged using fishing boats, Skeena and Nass districts.

APPENDIX A

TABLE THREE:

Aggregate Value of Capital Equipment Employed in Primary Fishing Operations[1], British Columbia, 1878 to 1900 (thousands of dollars)

YEAR	AMOUNT
1878	90.6
1879	75.1
1880	78.0
1881	120.0
1882	229.7
1883	253.2
1884	246.3
1885	234.3
1886	329.9
1887	362.5
1888	417.1
1889	572.7
1890	753.3
1891	858.5
1892	987.4
1893	970.3
1894	1020.5
1895	1057.4
1896	1363.6
1897	1166.7
1898	1288.2
1899	1215.3
1900	1440.6

Source: Urquhart, M.C. and K.A.H. Buckley (eds.) Historical Statistics of Canada, The MacMillan Company of Canada (Toronto:1965) Series M49-59

1 "The total value of capital equipment covered in this table consists of the value of boats, vessels (including fishing smacks) and the value of fishing gear such as net of all kinds, lines, lobster traps and the like used in the primary industry...In...British Columbia...the data represents the market value of capital equipment as estimated by fisheries officers."(Urquhart and Buckley,1965:390)

APPENDIX A

TABLE FOUR:

Number of persons engaged in primary fishing operations, in British Columbia[1], 1878 to 1900

YEAR	AMOUNT
1878	2804
1879	2121
1880	1883
1881	2893
1882	2787
1883	----[2]
1884	3281
1885	2820
1886	6211
1887	6184
1888	5940[3]
1889	7786
1890	8223
1891	8666
1892	8170
1893	13932
1894	12650
1895	14485
1896	15925
1897	20936
1898	22114
1899	20246
1900	21294

Source: Urquhart, M.C. and K.A.H. Buckley (eds.) Historical Statistics of Canada, The MacMillan Company of Canada (Toronto:1965) Series M38-48

1 "Primary operations include the catching and landing of all products of the coastal and inland waters"(Urquhart and Buckley, 1965:388).

"In British Columbia the count is based chiefly on the number of commercial licences issued with corrections for duplication. Estimates are made of the number of fishermen working as crews on fish packers and carrying smacks and these are included in the data given here. The data do not include men employed to operate salmon traps"(Urquhart and Buckley, 1965:389).

2 Not available for this year.

3 For the years 1888 to 1900 a number of cannery employees are included.

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