



September 5, 2002

## **The Aboriginal “Food” Fishery A DFO Black Market Operation**

OTTAWA— An unsanctioned fishery held to protest an aboriginal food fishery netted several B.C. salmon fishermen a Court appearance. Among those charged was John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-South Richmond).

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) had allowed members of the Katzie Band two 12-hour food fisheries on the Lower Fraser River August 31 and September 1 in spite of the Band having already taken huge catches under food fish licences in the preceding weeks.

The Band had reported to DFO catches of some 68,000 Sockeye with an estimated weight in excess of 450,000 lbs and 1,600 Spring Salmon with a estimated weight of over 32,000 lbs prior to the opening of the Labour Day weekend food fishery.

Given the high rate of non-reporting and under-reporting by bands during DFO sanctioned fisheries those totals represent only a fraction of the actual catch. Nevertheless the reported catch represents over 1,000 lbs of fish for every man, woman and child of the 459 member band of whom only 282 live on the reserve.

“The Katzie wouldn’t eat that much salmon in 10 years let alone one year,” said Cummins. “Their diet is no different than that of other residents of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.”

“The Katzie food fishery is a food fishery in name alone,” Cummins noted. “Fish caught under food licences are routinely sold, yet charges are seldom laid.”

“Three years ago I tracked fish, caught by Katzie band members under a food fishing licence, to the U.S. where it was sold. No charges were ever laid despite assurances from DFO that they would be.”

“It is time for the nonsense to stop,” concluded Cummins. “DFO must enforce the law or continue to be seen as an accomplice in the breaking of the law. Failure by DFO to take action on the misuse of food fish licences will mean continued protest by commercial fishermen.”

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