

**U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy Testimony
Clem Tillion**

Lady's - - Gentlemen -- Members of the Commission.

I thank you for this chance to address you, or should I say lobby you, For I am one of those who think our system here in Alaska is working. When I had the privilege of serving on the National Advisory committee on Oceans & Atmosphere with people like Julius Stratton, Ed Link and Bill Nierenberg The fight between the Law of the Sea advocates and those who were for unilateral action Was one of the big Items. After the Caracas meeting when Chad cast the vote to cancel that of the United States of America there was little doubt in my mind. Unilateral action was not only the route but the only route. To sit in the gallery and watch the Magnuson Act pass was a real pleasure. This does not mean we do not have a moral obligation to the whole world to manage well.

The difference in how the resources off Alaska and those off the New England states are managed amazes me. Some say it was the fact that unlike the little states of New England who sit cheek to jowl each with two Senators each. Alaska is all one entity, Others say because Senator Stevens was so close to Magnuson Alaska got a better deal. I am sure this did not hurt but it alone was not the reason.

The need to approach the management of our living resources on a more localized basis had become brutally apparent during Territorial days when the great white father ran every thing from the banks of the Potomac River. The Fish & Wildlife personnel in the field did there best but almost every act had to be cleared in D.C. and the special interests often had more say then those who were stationed in Alaska.

It was at this time in the mid 1950's that Alaska's course was set. When the Constitutional Convention was convened in Fairbanks and Territorial Senator Bill Egan became convention president Clarence Anderson who was to become Commissioner of the Fish and Game Department was there in close contact with Senator Eagan who was destined to be our first Governor. It was at that time that a modicum of insulation was placed between the body politic and Fish & Game. unlike most of Alaska's Departments who serve at the pleasure of the Governor Education & Fish and Game are picked from a list nominated by the respective boards. Thus the Commissioner of ADF&G is picked by the Governor from this list and as the boards serve staggered terms it tends to cool sudden actions; further more field announcements by Area Management Biologists require hours not weeks of notice.

The Convention also established a Board of Fish & Game chosen by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature and serving staggered terms who had in their hands the allocation of that portion of the living resources declared surplus by ADF&G biologists. In short the Department shall serve the resource the board the people.

Clarence Anderson called his biologists together and laid down the law: "Gentlemen the Governor has informed me of his support, any needed, to return our salmon runs to their

former abundance regardless of the pain inflicted on our people. So I call you here today to charge you with filling our streams with spawning salmon. If your actions result in a substantial over escapement, thus depriving our fishermen of their lively hood, you can expect to be criticized but on a more personal level if you allow an under escapement you can expect to be fired." This resulted in actions that for instance was closing all King Salmon harvest in Cook Inlet, Native Subsistence, Sport and Commercial for a number of years. The howls were loud, the pain severe. Lodges went under, Fishermen's gear became worthless, but today Alaska has eight times more salmon returning to their streams than returned before 1959 [Statehood] .

It was this type of mind set that was in place when the Magnuson Act came in in 1976. Senator Ted had assured Alaska of a voting majority on the NPFMC. Alaska and the State of Washington were at that moment blessed with Governors who were determined to manage our living resources for future generations. Governors Dan Evens and Jay Hammond set up a conference call and the result was a council picked primarily of men who knew each other from years on the International North Pacific Fisheries Commission; men like Ambassador Donald McKernan, Harold Lokken and Elmer Rasmuson. While the advisory panel became the industry voice the Scientific & Statistical Committee became a basis for all Council action. In these past twenty six years the council has often reduced the numbers recommended by the SSC committee but never have they exceeded it. The biggest cut being when the SSC told the council they had a biomes in the Bering Sea that could support a yearly harvest of three million six hundred metric tons. The Council at Chairman Rasmuson's recommendation set a cap of two million. Do we leave a great deal on the table? yes, but no long lived species has been lost in the race to maximize short term returns.

Has the NPFMC had to contend with actions taken in D.C. that like the Mammal Act was poorly thought out. For it failed to tell us what to do when a species such as the California Sea Lion, Harp Seal or in some areas the Pacific Sea Otter start impacting other species as their numbers exceed anything seen before. We see stupid wording that classify a species that has never been fished as over fished when its numbers decline for any reason thus tying up staff to do a paper work exercise to no purpose. If one council fails does that mean we must load so many failsafe burdens on the other Councils that they too fail?

My fear is that we get so boxed in that our Management can not adjust to a Decadal Oscillation or Regime Change as we had in 1947 and are in the midst of today. In 1948 I was packing salt cod for personal use in 1949. I had trouble filling the few kegs I wanted. Read Salt Of the Sea the story of the last Bering Sea Dory fishery under sail. The cod disappeared who knows why? No foreign fleet at that time. The King crab boom was on then in 1965 the cod came back right in to the teeth of a huge distant water fleet that was annihilating our long lived Pacific Ocean Perch. The flatfish populations exploded but we had no way to harvest them in real numbers for fear of impact on crab and young halibut. Now with out mans help they are going down. Does this mean we will have a increase in crab? I for one think so, but what happens if a flounder population reaches the over fished definition?

Twenty years ago the Steller Sea lion populations in western Alaska started declining so the panic button was pushed. The Council under pressure from National Marine Fisheries Service closed all Commercial fisheries within ten miles of the great rookery on Borgoslof Island. The Sea Lion in that area continued their decline so it was closed twenty miles off shore. Last year the survey showed a continued decline in Sea Lion but to every ones amazement there were ten thousand Fur Seal on the island. Shortage of fish? I think not. The diet of Sea lion and Fur Seal is not the same but is man the only player or when a regime change takes place does every thing but the long lived species, who are designed by nature to see it through, change?

Are those who declared the Western Steller Sea Lion endangered really using Biology or was their goal to make a park of the Aleutian Islands? Steller Sea Lion populate the coast from Northern Japan around to Oregon is a little part of this with only 40,000 animals endangered when in other area's they are increasing the cause for such alarm? Do Killer Whales play a significant part in the decline? and if so are they the cause of the decline or just a reason for a slow rebuilding? Are Pollock just junk food and do these animals need the oily fish smelt, sand lance, caplin to prosper?

Will we use science or emotion in the management of our living resources? if its to be emotion let me say at this time I represent the Aleut people before the Alaska Board Of Fish and The NPFMC. This is a people, American Citizens by birth who at our Government's orders were sent to internment camps during world war two. Some never to be allowed to return to the island of their birth. Internment camps where most of the old folks and new born died.

The Council and State Board are now treating them more fairly but the people of these islands have only the sea, they understand the need for conservation but have trouble understanding why they must conform to a Walt Disney view of there world.

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