

# Environmental action needed to restore salmon

This letter is not about sewage except to mention that the Sewer Plant Removal Petition is coming along nicely. To those of you who have already signed it, thank you for the support.

To those of you who haven't, we need your support also. There are copies scattered all over the community. To those who stood out in the cold to gather signatures, a very big thank you. We need more like you.

Sewage is but one concern among many dealing with the environment and related resources. I am sorry to say that it was only recently I became aware of the serious condition of the Tsolum River and the cause thereof. The ominous statement carried in a recent issue of a local paper: "The Tsolum River is Dead", hit home like a hammer blow to the solar plexus.

With it came the realization that we must unite to help the individual, who, it seems, is the lone champion in the fight to restore the river to its former pristine condition, when it was the producer of a substantial salmon run. That individual is the

chairman of the Tsolum River Enhancement Committee - Comox Valley Chapter B.C. Steelhead Society - Father Charles A.E. Brandt.

I can distinctly remember - before the Tsolum met its deplorable fate - standing on the old bridge across the Courtenay River, watching the fish heading up to the spawning grounds, to evoke the old description, wall-to-wall. It was worth looking at, that massive wave of salmon thrashing its way determinedly up-river to propagate and ensure the continuity of its kind.

That continuity was dealt a fatal blow by the conduct of those responsible for allowing Mt. Washington Copper Company to depart the area of its operations before fulfilling its obligations and responsibilities to the environment and related resources.

What's done is done and there is little likelihood, considering the performances of provincial and federal governments when faced with similar circumstances, of anyone being brought to task for their acts of negligence and irresponsibility. As

for seeking recompense from the guilty parties; for get it.

I have heard it said of the Tsolum that it cannot be restored. That is absolute and utter nonsense. All that is required is turn off the poison tap and the river will clean and restore itself. The next step is re-stocking and I am fairly certain any hatchery manager or member of his staff will enlighten anyone regarding the feasibility of that particular requirement.

So what do we do? Well, first we must recognize that this is not a penny-ante proposition. This is going to require a little bread, you know, long-green, that stuff the government is in the habit of giving itself in the form of salary raises, free use of government ferries and other little perks like using government planes for travelling all over the world, complete with families.

Next time ma-in-law wants to come for a visit phone our esteemed P.M. and ask for the use of a jet - after all, you are a taxpayer - to ferry her, like he did.

Then of course, there was the re-

cent announcement of a \$2.6 million handout to a bunch of entrepreneurs, mayors, lawyers, aliens and the like, who decided to pock-mark the B.C. coast with fish-farms, and who, I doubt, ever contributed very much to the cause of salmonid enhancement. There was some allusion to smugness. Well, who wouldn't be smug with a handout like that.

John and Mary Q. Taxpayer, those are your tax-dollars being tossed around.

Every person who owns a boat, commercial or sport, who pays a licence, big or small, who pays taxes on fishing-gear from a cod hand-line to a purse-seine, and we are reflecting on fair-size bucks, those are your dollars being maganimously handed out with such careless abandon.

So, now let's start asking for our spoonful of the stew. Sure, it'll take money to put the Tsolum back on track, but in today's figures it will not cost that much. For what it is worth, this is my suggestion: Everybody who has a stake in the Tsolum problem, and who stands to

benefit from its restoration (we are legion), should come forward and help Father Brandt.

Every organization, commercial or sports, every business directly affected - in the Courtenay, Campbell River Area there are many - every person interested in salmonid enhancement, should take the time to write a letter directed to Environment Minister Bruce Strachan - to Father Charles A.E. Brandt, chairman Tsolum River Enhancement Committee, Comox Valley Chapter B.C. Steelhead Society, 2364 Catherwood Road, R.R.I, Site 22, Black Creek, VOR 1C0. Simply state that you want action on the Tsolum River problem and you want it now.

For the uninitiated: The Tsolum River was poisoned by mine-tailings run-off. The government will not do anything decisive to alleviate the problem. The leaching process is still going strong and you can kiss off the river until it is permanently stopped. So, let's do something to stop it.

As to why you should do this: The benefits to be derived, to the commercial and sports sectors, by the

restoration of the Tsolum, could be of considerable proportions. Salmon mean dollars. More salmon means more food supplies, food that we may well be in need of, a little further down the road.

More salmon means more tax dollars and Mr. Environment Minister, you should be one of the first to recognize this, so let's get with it and get the Tsolum turning out those nice little salmonids again: millions of them.

You Campbell Riverites, you want an incentive? Think of all those extra nice fat salmon meandering past Cape Mudge Light. Not in too big a hurry either. What am I going to get out of this? No more than you will. Just the satisfaction of knowing I tried to help someone who's trying to do something good for all of us.

Also if I am going to bust my -----to keep sewage out of the Gulf I may as well contribute my two-bits toward having a few more salmon swimming around out there.

H.A. POWER  
Campbell River