

JULY 30, 1962

Indians ask fish rights conference

A plea to Indian fishermen to observe state laws, made Friday by the director of the State Department of Fisheries, has brought immediate response from the Swinomish Tribe.

Speaking for the tribe, Tandy Wilbur replied to Director George Starlund's plea today, and announced that the Indian fishermen have agreed to comply with the state request. Starlund had asked in a telegram made public, that Indian fishermen comply with closed periods and help "provide seed for future runs". He said Indian gear has placed the 1962 run in great jeopardy.

ASKS MEETING

Wilbur's reply said that the Indians would like to meet with Starlund and his staff and work out a better understanding of their mutual problems. "Indian fishermen are greatly outnumbered and so compelled to exercise their treaty fishing rights to gain a livelihood", he said. "They

should be given exclusive fishing times and grounds."

Wilbur went on to say that Swinomish Indians are just as desirous as the state to have a proper escapement of salmon and are in agreement with the state on conservation practices.

"HUNGRY PEOPLE"

Commenting on the contents of the telegram the Swinomish are sending to Starlund, Wilbur said that tribal fishing grounds have been taken away by one means and another during the past 50 years.

"You are dealing with hungry people," he said. "Fishing is the Swinomish peoples' only means of making a living. They have no year around employment. They were granted fishing rights and it would seem to me these concessions made in the Treaty should be honored by the white man."

"The Swinomish are not fishing for selfish reasons. They have gone into court and claimed fish-

ing rights on the Skagit River because their old fishing grounds on the Swinomish Channel have been destroyed through the years," Wilbur said.

CONSIDERATION ASKED

He added that the plight of the Indians and the promises of the Treaty should be given a great deal of consideration when the state attempts to forcibly stop Indian fishing.

Meanwhile, the conviction of two Indian fishermen from the Upper Skagit Tribe will be appealed to the State Supreme Court. Lawrence Joe and Raymond Boome, were found guilty of violating state game laws by fishing in the Skagit with set nets. Their attorney, Malcolm McLeod, Seattle, said he will appeal the verdict to the state's high court.

An earlier opinion, which found that Joe McCoy of the Swinomish Tribe was within his treaty rights in fishing near the river mouth, has been appealed by the game department and awaits state court action.