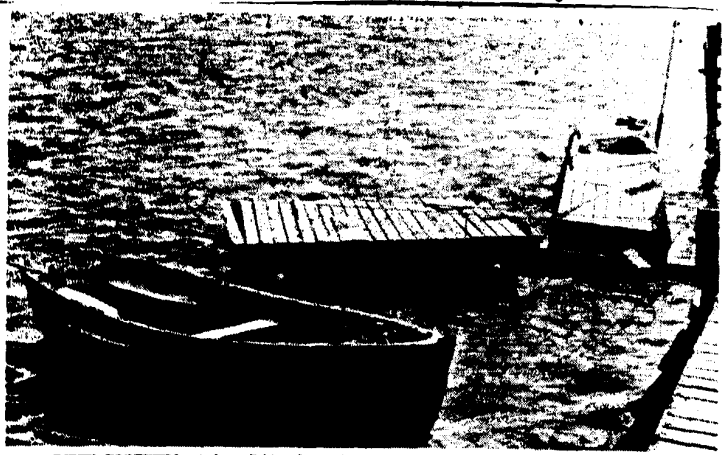
PEEKSKILL, N.Y.
STAR
(NEW YORK CITY MARKET AREA)
D. 13,000

FEB 27 1976



EMPTY FOREVER?—A lone fishing boat sits empty off a dock in Verplanck yesterday. Normally, according to fisherman at the dock, they would be making ready for the fishing season, but with the recent controversey and ban on most fishing in the Hudson, nothing is proceeding normally for the fishermen.

(Staff Photo by Jim Van Develde)

'Nobody will fish along the Hudson'

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By JIM VAN DEVELDE
Staff Reporter

"My father fished for years before me, then I started and the last year it's all I've done, my living...Now it doesn't look very good," explained Charles White of the recent decision to ban most commerical fishing on the Hudson River because of its possible harmful effects on the public health.

White sat on a dock in Verplanck with several others who fish or have fished the river commercially. He and his friends were not too happy about Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Odgen Reid's decision on Wednesday.

Over at the bait and tackle shop on Lent's Cove, the owner A.C. Lent, who retired from a lifetime of fishing a few years ago spoke of the decision. "They jumped the gun. They should have checked more before stopping the fishing. It's going to have a 'terrible effect because nobody will fish again along the Hudson."

Lent spoke of the other effects of the ban. "Boat rentals and bait and tackle shops all will and are being affected. Pointing to a news magazine headline proclaiming: "HUDSON-RIVER OF DEATH", Lent stated, "there will be a lot of people who will never eat fish from the Hudson again. There is no thinking of the other effects."

White, who used to be Lent's partner, agrees with this adding, "The survey was not extensive enough; the testing was of fish we normally don't catch."

Robert Conklin, who said he had fished commercially for 7 years on the Hudson added, "There is no proof. The fish they tested just don't spend enough time here."

White referred to a letter that had been written by the Hudson River Commercial and Sports Fishermen that pointed out the DEC had studied only the native striped bass which make up as little as 1 per cent of the river bass.

The letter pointed to bass that enters the river in the spring to spawn and then return to the ocean as being the bulk of the commercial fishermens catch. The letter ends stating that time, season and reason spent in the river make it logical for different P.C.B. readings to be taken.

Reid's order which banned most commercial fishing didn't end the fishing for shad and for Atlantic sturgeon due to the need for further testing in these fish, which will not be running until sometime in March.

White pointed out that the ban would cut his income in half. He will, he added, be able to continue getting shad which is the other half of his

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catch. "Still at the end of last season I bought $800 worth of net so I could increase my bass fishing, but that's gone, and I still have the net.

He estimated that there were probably 40 to 50 commercial fishermen on the Hudson River. Reid's office spoke of some 500 licenses that would be effected by the ban.

John Harris-Cronin of the Hudson River Sloop Restoration, said that there were several areas to consider in the whole controversey and economics is one' though the actual number of fisherman isn't great, it is growing. "Hudson River fishing has begun to look more viable. With the current economic situation, more fisherman were looking to making it a full time occupation. This, of course, has dashed those hopes."

Harris-Cronin said that he knew of one man who had sold his home and movied to Connecticut. This is all after he left a steady job last year to fish full time.

White said he knew of two fisherman, one 78 and one 80 over in Ossining that are going out of business now.

The PCB's come from discharges made by General Electric plants in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, approximatly 200 miles north of New York City.

White asserted that it was a hasty decision. "Eventually they will find the fish is nowhere as contaminated as they thought." He did compliment Reid on taking action because as White said, it should have been done several years ago in 1970 or 1971. "If something had been done, we could be fishing right now."

Harris-Cronin spoke of another aspect of the ban that he saw as tragic the loss of the art of fishing as its done on the Hudson. "The fishing is done today in the same way it has been done traditionally" Cronin lamented. He spoke of the possible loss of the skill and knowledge of the fishermen picked up through the years

Tradition? Cronin told of how his kids all want to learn how to fish from their dad, as he did. Lent has fished all his life, White since he was in his early teens and those two fishermen in Ossining, White said they'd been fishing for 52 years.

The other area that Harris-Cronin saw was perhaps the most important, the health question. He said the DEC was looking out for the health of the public. Researchers have found that PCB causes various physical ailments in fish and other animals while inconclusive evidence suggesting that they may cause skin ailments and possibly cancer in humans has been found.

The fishermen at the dock in Verplanck all emphasized that they would never try to sell anything they believed was harmful to people. Harris-Cronin agreed that he knew of nobody who wanted to sell anything that was dangerous.

Then the question remains now how about the future of fishing on the river. For his part, Harris-Cronin the DEC will get more meaningful data and he foresees that happening this year.

White talked of meetings between the state, the fishermen, the sloop people and others about that future.

Suggestions have been made to open up what is called the escapement period in fishing. This is a period of time where no fish can be caught. Opening this up would allow fishermen more time to fish for the shad that they can catch.

Another suggestion, White said, was some sort of subsidy where the fisherman would be paid to fish and would tag the fish and help directly with the research on the Fish in the river. White saw this as an opportunity for the state to get some excellent research done. Harris-Cronin said the fishermen he know want to remain active in fishing.

"For a lot of them this is a livehood, but also something more, it is their life and they want to be part of the sampling, tagging and fishing on the river.

Reid said in making his announcement, that it could be a decade before the river is rid of chemicals.

The fishermen in Verplanck saw little hope. One retired fisherman Thomas Crawford spoke of the feeling that so many have for the river, "I always told my kids that no matter how bad things got, that as long as you could fish, you'd never go hungry.

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