



SUMMARY OF VESSEL AND GEAR SPECIFICATIONS
OF THE CANADIAN TRAWL FLEET ON THE
BRITISH COLUMBIA COAST, 1968-69

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The Canadian trawl fleet on the Pacific coast is composed of relatively small vessels compared to the large ocean-going types characteristic of Canada's east coast and those in trawl fleets from Japan and the U.S.S.R. No one conventional type of vessel has been developed for the British Columbia trawl fishery. When not trawling these vessels may operate as gillnetters (salmon), trollers (salmon), longliners (halibut) or purse-seiners (salmon, herring). Only the smaller vessels will operate as gillnetters and trollers. Lipka (1967) details several reasons for the diversity of vessels. The Canadian trawl fishery on the Pacific coast was a small operation during the period 1921 to 1939 and it was not economical to use the large conventional steam trawlers which had been used for a short time during the first World War. When demands for bottom fish reached a peak during World War II large vessels were not available for trawling purposes and a great number of boats from other occupations entered the ground-fish operation on a part-time basis. Large vessels were not actually required because the British Columbia coastline is heavily indented with coves and inlets which provide shelter from stormy weather at maximum distances of 30 to 40 miles from the major fishing grounds. The near coastal grounds supplied sufficient quantities of fish to meet market demands and there was no need to fish farther afield.

In addition, low prices for bottom fish did not encourage large capital investment. Recent expansion of markets has attracted more vessels to the fishery, but vessels built for the trawl fishery were generally designed to be easily converted for use in other coastal fisheries (halibut, salmon, herring).

The Canadian west coast trawl fleet in 1968 and 1969 consisted of 73 and 72 vessels, respectively (Table 1). However, about 40% of those trawled less than six months in any calendar year. Vessel size ranged from 8 to 265 gross tons and averaged 55 and 60 gross tons, respectively, in 1968 and 1969. Average size of those which were engaged in the fishery for more than 6 months during the year was 60 and 61 gross tons, respectively, in 1968 and 1969. There was an apparent exodus of smaller boats (less than 50 gross tons) to other fisheries.

Vessels were generally stern trawl types; i.e., using a double towing cable from 2 separate points on the stern of the vessel and bringing the codend aboard on the starboard side. Specifications for the average type of gear used are as follows:

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Head rope length | 21.9 m | (72 ft) |
| Ground rope length | 28.7 m | (94 ft) |
| Mesh size intermediate | 112 mm | (4.4 in) |
| codend | 112 mm | (4.4 in) |
| Otter board - size | 2.2 × 1.2 m | (7.2 × 3.8 ft) |
| weight | 325 kg | (716 lb) |
| type wood and steel 65% | | |
| steel 35% | | |

Table 1. Size distribution (gross tons) of vessels engaged in the west coast Canadian trawl fishery.

| Tonnage class | Number | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|------|
| | 1968 | 1969 |
| a) <u>All vessels</u> | | |
| 8-24 | 12 | 13 |
| 25-49 | 27 | 26 |
| 50-74 | 18 | 17 |
| 75-99 | 7 | 6 |
| 100-124 | 6 | 4 |
| 125-195 | 3 | 5 |
| 265 | 0 | 1 |
| Total vessels | 73 | 72 |
| Average gross tons | 55.1 | 59.3 |
| b) <u>Vessels fishing 6 months or longer in each year</u> | | |
| 12-24 | 3 | 4 |
| 25-49 | 17 | 13 |
| 50-74 | 17 | 16 |
| 75-99 | 4 | 4 |
| 100-125 | 4 | 3 |
| 125-195 | 2 | 2 |
| Total vessels | 47 | 42 |
| Average gross tons | 59.7 | 61.2 |

REFERENCES

Lippa, E. J. R. MS 1967. British Columbia trawlers and trawl gear. Fish. Res. Bd. Canada, Tech. Rept. Ser. No. 13, 47 p.