The Song of the Sockeye

The Song of the Sockeye
(Ross Cumbers)

1. Hark to the song of the sockeye,
Like a siren call of old
When it gets in your blood, you can't shake it,
It's the same as the fever for gold.

2. There's a hole in the BC coastline,
Rivers Inlet's the place I mean
It's there that you find the old timer,
And also the fellow who's green.

3. The boats head for there like the sockeye
And some are a joy to the eye
While others are simply abortions
And ought to be left high and dry.

4. They go to the different canneries
And before they can make one haul
It's three hundred bucks for net, grub and gas
Which they hope to pay off before fall.

5. Then it's off to the head of the inlet
At six o'clock Sunday night
But when morning comes and you've got about three
The prospects don't look very bright.

6. Of course there's always an alibi
To account for a very poor run -
The weather is wrong, the moon's not full
Or the big tides will help the fish come.

7. Along about dusk, when you're starting to doze
And think you've got a good night's set
An engine will roar as you look out the door
And some farmer toes into your net.

8. And some of them think of the future,
While others have things to forget
But most of us sit here and think of a school
Of sockeye hitting the net.

9. Then when the season is over

And you figure out what you have made
You were better off working for wages,
No matter how low you were paid.

10. For the comforts of home are worth something,
So take it from me, my friend,
Frying pan grub and no headroom
Will ruin your health in the end.

11. Repeat verse 1

- written at Rivers Inlet by Ross Cumbers in 1939: found as a typed sheet on a noticeboard at an abandoned cannery there in the late 'fifties by Nick Guthrie, who passed it to Barry Hall who passed it on to PJ Thomas who made a tune for it (Songs of the Pacific Northwest). JB
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