

# JAP OUSTER HITS OYSTER INDUSTRY

OLYMPIA, March 5.—(UP)—Washington's oyster industry, which produces 90 per cent of the oysters on the Pacific Coast, is headed for difficult times as a result of impending evacuation of Japanese oystermen predicted today.

Virtually all the labor employed by the industry is Japanese, since the Americans have shown little desire to work the oyster beds or in the opening houses and canneries. Washington produces more than \$1,000,000 a year worth of Japanese or Pacific oysters and \$250,000 worth of the highly-respected Olympia oysters, all of which are grown in Puget Sound or Willapa and Grays Harbors.

## Labor Shortage Due

Oystermen of this area predicted they would have difficulty in finding white men to work the oyster beds and canneries when the Japanese are evacuated.

Slowing-down of the industry will hit the Pacific oyster growers harder than the Olympia, since the larger variety matures faster. E. N. Steele of Olympia, one of the Pacific operators, declared war with Japan cut off the supply of Pacific oyster seed.

This will not be serious, however, because many seed are being produced now in Washington waters," he said. "Growers are trying to catch some of the seed, now that they cannot buy them from Japan.

"There will be a shortage of oyster workers when the Japs are evacuated, even though we can find white men who know how to do the work. White men do not like to work the night tides in winter, for some reason."

## All Union Workers

Steele said there were more than 50 Japanese employed in this area and several hundred over the state. All of them belong to the A. F. of L. Oyster Cannery Workers' Union and draw good wages, so the wage problem for white help to replace them will not force prices up.

George Draham, president of the Olympia Oyster Company, said the oyster industry slackens off during summer months and will not be so hard hit by Jap evacuation as if it came in the fall or winter. Lack of pickers in the beds will not hurt the valuable Olympia oyster crop since they will live several years without losing marketability.