

ANGLER ASKS ADVICE ON RENT

(The problem presented in this summary of a letter received by the School from one of its correspondence course students is an interesting one. To the writer it is a pressing problem—one that he desires counsel on. Readers are earnestly requested to give it consideration, and to give Mr. Kinsella advice on how to fix the rent of fishing grounds, in order that he may present an argument to the local taxing authorities.—Ed.)

How to wrest control of the rich fishing grounds of Great South Bay from the private corporations that hold them on long terms leases at absurdly low rentals, is the problem posed by Chris Kinsella, of Holbrook, L. I., in an unusual letter to THE FREEMAN. Mr. Kinsella is no mere outsider, raising a question only for its academic interest. He feels that he and his fellow Long Islanders are suffering from a great wrong and he means to do something about it. "Some of our bay men", he writes, "trace their descent from the earliest Dutch and English settlers on Long Island, and they go down to the bay for their living as did their fathers and grand-fathers before them. For generations, leases on the bay bottom were practically handed down from father to son."

But times are changing. "The

people of Brookhaven own 30,000 acres of the finest shell-fish land in the world. Since the depression set in in 1929, more and more of our citizens have turned to the calling of their ancestors—going to the bays, to Mother Nature, for their livelihood, clamming, oystering, fishing, scalloping. But here is the rub; all the rich lands are taken by the big oyster companies. On the free ground any citizen may go and take half a bushel of oysters a day, but you have to have a boat, tongs, etc., and there are not so many oysters and clams left on 'the margin'. It takes four or five years to grow an oyster to market size."

Mr. Kinsella wants to restore these enormously valuable fishing grounds to the Long Island communities that gave them their value. He has no objection to company leases—on a fair basis. "The companies have the capital, fine equipment, boats, etc.," he says. "Leave them in possession but on some practicable plan that will be a fool-proof gauge to capture the rent that belongs to the people. It is ridiculous to assess at \$10 and \$20 an acre oyster frouds that will produce more wealth than the most valuable farming land in Suffolk County—1,500 to 2,000 bushels of oysters annually, worth a dollar a bushel in Fulton Market."

—C. O. S.