

*Fishing Industry*

into account the limits of catch required to ensure health of the stocks. Further, once the total allowable catch, or TAC, is established, hard, sometimes painful decisions have to be made as to which sector of the industry will be allowed to prosecute a particular fishery. The industry survived the crisis. And I suggest that the record performance this year in landings, value and exports does not reflect a government that has failed to support the Canadian fishing industry.

I do not wish to pretend there are no longer problems, Mr. Speaker. There are. But I also know that this government is not waiting for another crisis to respond. Solutions are being found and the government is working closely with all segments of the industry to ensure that the action taken is reasonable, equitable and successful.

A recent, striking example of this co-operative approach to fisheries management was the three-day Gulf Groundfish Seminar held in New Brunswick in late September. This government-industry seminar brought together more than 100 representatives of fishermen's organizations, processors, and federal and provincial government officials. The object was to review the whole question of groundfish stocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and to address the many issues involved in the management and sharing of these stocks.

During the course of the seminar, the minister announced the creation of a separate gulf region. This decision is now being implemented. Critics who try to make a case that the government is not taking action in support of the Canadian fishing industry have either chosen to ignore, or are not listening to, the facts. Have they, for example, followed the progress being made in the revamping of the licensing system of the east coast fishery? May I also remind critics who argue that the Department of Fisheries acts arbitrarily in such matters, that the development of a new licensing scheme involved consultation with a vast cross-section of the industry. In fact representatives of more than 25,000 fishermen and other segments of the industry have participated in the process.

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The nature of the new licensing régime is to give fishermen a more direct voice in the management of their industry. Indeed, the changes to the old system are ones put forward by fishermen themselves.

The first step in the new licensing régime will be the categorization of personal fishing licences to reflect full-time and part-time fishermen. As well, local licensing allocation and appeal committees will be created, headed by people who are not members of the federal bureaucracy, and a majority of whose members will be fishermen.

The intention is to implement these two key recommendations early in 1981, with other revisions to the existing licensing system to be adopted subsequently over a phased period.

I referred earlier to the basic problem of the fishery in the early 1970s as being too few fish. I repeat that tremendous progress has been made in rebuilding stocks and, in fact, the limit has been reached in that effort for most stocks. For

example, between 1974 and 1979, the catch of Atlantic groundfish increased from 418,000 tons to 686,000 tons, or by 64 per cent. That rate of increase will not continue. Groundfish stocks have generally met the prediction made in 1975 that it would take five years for them to rebuild. With the exception of northern cod, no more than 10 per cent to 15 per cent increases in volume can be expected in the future.

Therefore, the focus of the industry must shift from volume of fish to a concentration of measures to enhance the value of available catch. In this effort, quality of product and orderly marketing go hand in hand.

Here again the government is offering support and guidance, as well as the occasional prod, to the industry. Canadian fish must become known in the international marketplace as the best possible product, and we must produce what the marketplace is looking for. Only when these two criteria are met, can Canadian fish command the best possible price around the world.

In terms of the value of our fish products, Canada is now the largest exporter of fish in the world. In 1979, for example, we earned approximately \$1.3 billion from exports of fish and seafood. But, we cannot rest on our laurels. We are a leader today in exports, but to stay there will require concentrated effort on the part of all segments of the industry. The Canadian name on a fish product must be synonymous with top quality, for it is consistent top quality that translates into top prices.

The government has a substantial history of involvement in programs to upgrade the quality of standards of Canadian fish. A comprehensive national fish inspection program aimed at ensuring the health and safety of the consumer, adherence to minimum quality standards, and the prevention of fraudulent practices, has been in effect for many years. As well, the department has provided financial assistance for improved handling and storage facilities, and has implemented assistance programs to provide increased icemaking and cold-storage facilities. For the inshore fishery, improved equipment for on-board handling, offloading, dockside handling and transporting of fish to processing plants have also been provided. Throughout all these programs, the industry has been co-operative and innovative in its efforts to produce a top quality product.

But, all that said and done, the government is now in the process of enhancing its support of programs geared at ensuring consistent quality of Canadian fish. In consultation with fishermen's organizations, processors and provincial governments, the department has established guidelines for quality upgrading initiatives, and has now embarked on a major quality program.

The program is geared to assisting the industry in meeting the greatest challenge before it—achieving and maintaining the best possible product to compete in increasingly competitive markets. Again, bearing in mind that the size of future catches will not be a great deal larger than the levels we have now reached, it is not an easy challenge, for fish is among the most highly perishable of all foods, and spoilage begins the