

oceanographic conditions. If fishermen take too many fish, the stocks become vulnerable to destruction, from man-made or natural causes or a combination of both.

Sustainable development means living off the interest of the resource — not running down its capital.

Consequently, both NAFO and Canada subscribe to the strategy of allowing for margins of error in the total allowable catch limits that are set. Fisheries managers, both within Canada and NAFO, set aside a safe portion of the total catchable stock for commercial harvesting each year. This approach, if carefully followed, should guarantee healthy and growing fish stocks, permitting a gradual increase in the total allowable catch from year to year until optimal sustainable limits are reached.

For its part the EC has refused to accept the NAFO regulations and has conducted what has amounted to a virtually unrestrained fishery on the Grand Banks.

The history of the fisheries proves, beyond any doubt that unrestrained catches can destroy an industry. A tragic example occurred in Europe's

own North Sea waters. European fleets ruined their own herring fishery there, following enormous annual catches of more than 1.2 million t in the mid-1960s. By the late 1970s, North Sea herring fishing was banned in order to let the stocks revive, at a cost of severe economic and social dislocation in many traditional fishing communities.

The EC says it uses a management strategy that ensures conservation of the resource. However, the EC considers it appropriate to set for itself quotas 12 times higher than those set for the EC by NAFO, despite the fact that the EC's — and all other NAFO members' — catches are declining year by year as a consequence of this approach.

As matters stand now, the northwest Atlantic fishery may join the doleful list of victims of overfishing, unless the EC makes the decision to return to a strategy of conservation.

The Canadian government is committed to a sound conservation policy for the northwest Atlantic fishery. But international co-operation in adhering to NAFO's quotas is required by all parties if the principle of sustainable development is to take hold.

Former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland's landmark report, *Our Common Future*, stressed the urgency of adopting environmentally sustainable economic development.

Ray W. Zwicker

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