I have known personally from hearing from Newfoundlanders that it has been a problem for some time. Seals certainly were mentioned. The scientists now estimate that seals are consuming some 1.5 million tonnes of marine life annually.

It does not matter really whether they are eating cod, capelin, shrimp or a combination of all three. They are eating something that enters into the chain. Whether they are eating cod or what cod eat, they are affecting the cod population. It is so logical that I do not know how it can be questioned.

I saw a program last night on the news channel as I was waiting to take part in the debate in which one of the scientists seemed to write that off totally. He wanted to ignore completely the fact that the seal population has almost doubled in the last eight years. At that rate, the seals are going to be consuming more and more cod, capelin or shrimp or whatever the cod are eating; directly or indirectly, that will affecting the cod population.

We should be harvesting that under-utilized resource. It is done in some countries. I saw on the same program that Iceland harvests that resource. It harvests the seals without drawing any attention to itself. I am not sure how it manages it. Perhaps we should try to make a deal with Iceland so that we do harvest our seals and ship them to Iceland where they can be exported without causing any problems, or dealt with in some way.

I have been trying to find out since yesterday evening about nine or ten o'clock when I saw that. At 11.45 a.m. today I still have not been able to find out how the Icelanders manage to accomplish this without attracting a lot of undue attention.

It is also Canadian overfishing. The minister talked about the various excuses that the European Community gives for overfishing the quota. I thought he was not going to do it, but at the very end he did mention one more thing, that the European Community claims that we are also overfishing the quota.

I had an opportunity as a member of the fisheries committee to travel to Europe again in 1990. The committee split in half. Some of us went to the Iberian Peninsula, Spain, Portugal, et cetera. Others went in the other direction. I am one of the ones who went in the other direction.

We all heard the same arguments. They all told us that Canadians were also overfishing their quotas, and indeed we were. They were not the quotas set by government necessarily, but the quotas recommended to us by our own scientists.

The minister said that we were not paying attention to our own scientists, and the scientists could not get together. The European Community was not setting the quotas. They were being set by NAFTA. Our scientists were really giving it the information. It was setting the quotas and the Europeans were supposed to accept the quotas that were set in the first stage, the first step, by our scientists. Each year we were setting quotas that were higher than were recommended to us by the scientists. We were not overfishing our quotas because we boosted them up too high.

• (1150)

I can recall the present Minister of Fisheries and Oceans saying that he was not going to wreck the Newfoundland economy, that he was not going to put that kind of pressure on the economy in Newfoundland and lower the quota to the figure recommended by the scientists, by the Harris commission.

The previous minister of fisheries said much the same thing, as quoted in the Harris report, with respect to a recommendation on fishing. A further recommendation was rejected by Mr. Valcourt on March 30, 1990 because of the additional hardships it would produce in 1990 following total allowable catch reductions previously announced.

The Harris commission recommended further reductions. The minister said no because it was going to create additional hardships. The current Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said that if it is going to create hardships today, it does not matter what will happen tomorrow, he is not prepared to lower those quotas.