

Nonetheless, France must do what it can to provide some underpinning for its equidistance thesis. To this end, France indulges in arguments that suggest a kind of dialectical cubism, refashioning reality into unlikely patterns to fit the geometry of equidistance.

Take geography to begin with. To meet its purposes here, France simply lops off some 352 nautical miles of Canadian coast as being irrelevant to the delimitation. The French test of relevance, of course, is whether any segment of the Canadian coast serves to construct the French equidistance line. With this same object in mind, France also transforms adjacency into oppositeness by linking St. Pierre and Miquelon to the coast of Nova Scotia rather than the coast of Newfoundland of which the islands form a part.

Having made Newfoundland small by decreeing it so, France makes it rich by the same method. Newfoundland, we are told, has an abundance of resources and its economic well-being owes nothing to fish: the poorest and most dependent region of Canada is painted in the image of California. The economy of St. Pierre and Miquelon, on the other hand, is transmuted from one that depends on the public sector to one that depends on the fishery. The idea, of course, is to give some colour of equity to France's equidistance claim. This time, however, the French argument requires that the whole of Newfoundland be considered relevant and not just scraps of its south coast. And so the rules of relevance are changed forthwith to meet France's convenience.

France's attempt to belittle the south coast of Newfoundland is matched by its attempt to belittle the fishermen there. Thus, we are told that some of them have only a "statistical existence," that fishing on that coast is only of a "social" character, and that it is sustained only by subsidies and unemployment insurance.

Mr. President, distinguished Members of the Court, let me assure you that the fishermen of the south coast of Newfoundland have more than a statistical existence. They are flesh and blood. They fish for a living, not for a pastime. The support they receive from the State reflects the nature of the resource and the need for conservation. And it is no greater than the support France gives, for instance, to its farmers and fishermen.

In any case, the Government of Canada has no apology to make for supplementing incomes of fishermen where the alternative is poverty, unemployment and the collapse of entire communities. And the people of the south coast of Newfoundland have no apology to make for working as long as they can at whatever jobs they can find, full-time or part-time. France may deride the inshore fishermen and the villages to which they have stubbornly clung for hundreds of years. As for Canada, we take pride in preserving a meaningful way of life on this hard coast.