

I stated in the House on November 5, 1976, that I would be reporting on my recent talks in Paris regarding Canada / France fisheries questions. I propose to do that today but first I think it would be useful to review in a more general way developments relating to the implementation of our 200 mile fisheries zone.

The decision to extend our fisheries zones on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts was taken in light of the urgent need to halt the rapid depletion of our fish stocks and arrest the decline of our inshore fisheries industry, a situation which had reached crisis proportions. The urgent nature of this problem required us to take action before conclusion of the Law of the Sea Conference where fisheries questions are among the many matters being discussed. Nevertheless the new extended jurisdiction is in conformity with the consensus emerging at the Law of the Sea Conference. The principle is now firmly embodied in the Revised Single Negotiating Text that a coastal state has the sovereign right to manage the living resources of the seas in a 200 mile zone adjacent to its shoreline. The main features of the new Canadian regime are based on the relevant provisions of the RSNT.

A number of countries have enacted, or are soon to enact, 200 mile zones including Mexico, Norway, Denmark, France, the U.K., and the U. S. A. Most recently, the Foreign Ministers of the Nine agreed that a European Economic Community 200 mile fisheries zone should be in place as of January 1, 1977. Altogether there are now some 50 states which have already, or will soon establish extended fisheries zones beyond 12 miles, and in many cases, as far as 200 miles.

Thus from the standpoint of both emerging treaty law and cumulative state practice there is a sound basis in international law for the action Canada has taken to protect the living resources in waters contiguous to its shoreline.

Canada has not only acted in accordance with emerging international law but has also made every effort to take into account the interests of those states directly affected by our extended jurisdiction. We have been conscious of the need to avoid disputes with other countries stemming from our new fisheries management regime. For this reason, Canada has taken a number of steps internationally, aimed at achieving a smooth transition to our new 200 mile jurisdiction regime.

Our first priority was to obtain agreement within ICNAF on fishing quotas for the calendar year 1977 which would correspond to Canadian requirements within the 200 mile zone. At Canada's insistence, total allowable catches of stock have been set at levels low enough to ensure rebuilding of threatened species over a period of time. There will be a further meeting of ICNAF in December in Spain to deal with the quotas on a few remaining stocks.