

*Private Members' Business*

point in time when Canadian fishermen must remain, alongside and plants had to be closed because foreign overfishing among other things has been a major factor in causing this moratorium. Were an international court of justice—as I understand it is to consider it and follow the four precedents that pertain in this case, it is my belief we could win our case.

There is no question it would take a lot of time. It would take a lot of talent. It would take a lot of negotiation but the name of the game is to try to say that we are going to do it. Put your back behind the wheel and put your case forward because I can assure you one thing, it is like buying a lotto ticket. If you do not buy a ticket you cannot win. If we do not put our case forward we will never know whether we will be able to control our own fisheries, in this case specifically the nose and tail of the banks.

As I draw to a close my address on this motion, I believe it is one of the motions put forward in this House which if voted affirmatively could have the most positive action on Atlantic Canada in restoring our fishery and restoring our custodial management of those stocks and those resources that affect, in the words of the Chamber of Commerce, 80,000 Canadians. I urge our members and our colleagues to join me and vote when the time comes in support of this important and key motion.

**Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak in response to the speech of the hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception. I know he speaks passionately about this subject. He also speaks about a subject of which he has had a lot of firsthand experience from people in his own constituency, and I am sure he has sailed on the Grand Banks as well.

I have not, but I have been out on the Pacific. I have been where the salmon on the west coast traverse and on the rivers they go up to spawn as well. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency has risen in this House on more than one occasion to describe what would happen if Canada unilaterally extended the custodial jurisdiction for cod or any species beyond the 200-mile limit.

Such gunboat diplomacy would be in violation of international agreements. The hon. member opposite is thinking in terms of gunboat diplomacy because he comes from that milieu, from a long history of being in the navy and they understand that kind of diplomacy.

I feel it would invite retaliatory action and would threaten the co-operation we are succeeding in obtaining from many states in efforts to promote sustainable development of fisheries resources on the high seas.

I would like to outline for hon. members opposite and for all members in this House two of our most recent achievements toward that goal. The first, and the member opposite has alluded to it, is the agreement we have reached with the European Community. The second is the positive outlook for sustainable development in high seas fisheries demonstrated by representatives of 48 like-minded states at a meeting which our government hosted in St. John's in preparation for the United Nations Conference on High Seas Fisheries which will begin in New York City this coming April. The comprehensive agreement with the European Community which was reached in December 1992 has the potential to go a long way toward ending the calamity of overfishing outside the 200-mile limit.

Hon. members are well aware that foreign overfishing has taken a heavy toll on stocks of cod, flounder and redfish that straddle the 200-mile limit and that the principal source of this problem has been fleets from the European Community. Now our agreement with the European Community has the potential to make the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization once more as it was in the years following the extension of jurisdiction in 1977, an effective means to conserve and manage fisheries for straddling stocks in international waters.

Central to this is that the EC will now, as it did until 1986, accept and abide by NAFO quotas and other conservation and management decisions. In 1989 the Government of Canada launched diplomatic, legal and public information initiatives against foreign overfishing. Tragically since 1989 the state of straddling stocks has gone from bad to worse.

For example, the total allowable catch for the Grand Banks flounder stock, American plaice, has been cut by more than 75 per cent. However, over the last four years there have been a number of positive steps which indicate that there will be an improvement in the resource in the near future.