

*The Address*

running in the opposite direction, I shall start my remarks in the same vein, coming as I do from a maritime riding, by pointing out that the member for Gaspé has continued, unlike his party, to ride the wave that the people of Quebec directed toward that party in 1984. In 1984 we talked about le beau risque, the gallant gamble. In 1988 they talked about returning with honour and enthusiasm. The riding of Gaspé has taken the same wave, and perhaps the Conservative Party was not listening to it.

• (1125)

As a member of the Bloc Québécois I intend to continue to repeat what the people of the riding of Gaspé and of Quebec said in the recent federal election.

The House of Commons is for me a place to speak out for the residents of the great riding of Gaspé. It is one of the most beautiful parts of Quebec. Whether my fellow members from Quebec agree or not, I would say it is the most beautiful part of Quebec. It is such a jewel that in the early 1970s the Liberal Party decided to create Forillon National Park on the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula.

It was in the Forillon National Park affair that the man who is now Prime Minister of Canada first took up arms against Quebec. In 1972, the member for Shawinigan expressed his delight at having gone over the head of the Bourassa government to create Forillon Park, and I quote his remarks at the time: "I used the Park to break the Quebec government and I'm proud of it!" Our new Prime Minister started his career fittingly.

We have a saying where I come from: you can take the Gaspésien out of Gaspé, but you can't take the Gaspé out of the Gaspésien. To a Gaspésien, having land expropriated forges character. As the motto of Quebec has it, we remember.

This maritime riding developed to a great extent thanks to cod. Centralizing federal management of this marine resource leaves a bitter taste in our mouths, just as the Forillon Park affair did. Management imposed from outside dismisses local attempts to solve the industry's problems. This is not the first time the fishery has undergone a crisis.

In the early 1970s, the cod stock was in about the same state as it is today, but the resourcefulness of the fishing folk of the time turned them toward other species. When in the early 1970s they could catch no more cod, they went after crab. Crab fishing was no gold mine then, but it is now.

A little later, around 1976, it was the turn of the ocean perch fishery in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence to decline. The people who had been catching ocean perch started harvesting shrimp instead, because shrimp was not so well known. Their resourcefulness enabled them to get through a crisis.

I would conclude that these maritime communities have the ability to adapt as long as they have the freedom to work together. They can let each other know when there are other species around that are undervalued and could be marketed. For that to work there have to be channels of rapid communication between the decision makers and the ordinary people, the fishermen on the front line. The ability to make rapid feedback possible was lost by Quebec under its Liberal government in 1982 when jurisdiction over fisheries was returned.

It is high time the federal government opened its eyes. In 1986, rapid feedback would have enabled the people who fished for cod inshore and saw the stocks were declining to adapt. While cod stocks were declining, other species, wrongly thought to be undesirable, should have been promoted.

The problem goes a lot further than the exhausted stocks the department has proclaimed. It is the whole structure of the industry that has to be rethought. Instead of getting on with the structural changes needed to react to cyclical variations in cod stocks, the throne speech is still looking for someone to blame for their disappearance.

• (1130)

In order to get the economy going again, the government must set directions for the future of the fishing industry. I will address two important aspects of this issue; harvesting the resource and protecting workers.

Cod fishing is older than Canada. Since the fishery began, fish have been harvested using the preservation methods we knew. In the beginning, we salted and dried cod. With the arrival of electricity and freezers, we made blocks of frozen cod. That is what we are still doing, or were until the minister turned off the tap.

These types of harvesting resulted in the setting of an implicit standard on the length of fish caught. In order to meet these standards, which were set for a specialized industry, fishermen had to throw back undesirable fish solely on the basis of length.

The restructuring of the fishing industry, or rather, the revolution of the fishing industry, was not addressed in the speech from the throne.

Despite decades of intervention by the federal government, the structure of the fishing industry is still at the elementary school level. What does the government intend to do in order to upgrade it to the university level?

University is the top of the line. We must no longer limit our efforts to the traditional mass market. Instead we must seek out new market niches, such as those for fresh fish and under-utilized species. This means that we must support the fishing communities so that they are able to meet these new standards. We must enable them to make more money while catching fewer fish.