

Canada makes important gains at international fisheries meeting

Canada achieved all its major objectives at the special meeting of the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF) that ended in Tenerife, Spain on December 9, Fisheries and Environment Minister Roméo LeBlanc announced last month.

The meeting adopted by a large majority amendments to the ICNAF Convention proposed by Canada. These amendments have the effect of recognizing that Canada has the right to manage the fisheries within its 200-mile zone, established on January 1. The Commission will no longer have any management functions within this zone, although it will be able to provide any scientific advice requested by Canada. As to fisheries beyond the 200-mile zone, the Commission will retain its former management functions, in which Canada will continue to take an active part.

The amendments adopted by the Commission are subject to approval by member governments.

The meeting also approved a Canadian-sponsored resolution that recom-

mends action as soon as possible this year to develop a new framework for multilateral fisheries co-operation in the northwest Atlantic fisheries in line with the new jurisdictional realities. It is expected that an international conference will soon be called for this purpose. Canada intends to be in the forefront of these developments.

Regulations

The fisheries regulations adopted by ICNAF at this special meeting also satisfied Canada's concerns, among which was the establishment of national allocations and other regulations for a number of stocks on the Scotian shelf.

Canada reserved for itself the entire total allowable catch (TAC) for Nova Scotia herring, mackerel, and flounder, except for small allocations for by-catches and for the U.S.A. and France (flounder only) as neighbouring coastal states. Agreement was also reached on regulations for silver-hake fishing off Nova Scotia, which limits bottom trawling with small-mesh nets to an

area outside a line at the outer edge of the Scotian shelf in order to minimize by-catches of small cod, haddock and flatfish.

The agreement includes provision for experimental fishing operations closer inshore involving U.S.S.R., Cuban and Canadian vessels, but only as part of a research program with Canada being able to place observers aboard. Canada indicated willingness to alter the offshore line during the 1977 season if the experiment revealed areas inside the line where silver hake could be taken without incurring undesirable by-catches. Canadian scientists believe that by-catches in the bottom trawl fisheries have been a major reason for the decline of cod stocks off Nova Scotia in recent years. Implementation of the regulations will go far towards resolving this problem.

Canada was also successful in having the total allowable catch for silver hake reduced from 100,000 tons in 1976 to 70,000 tons in 1977 and, for the first time, reserved a substantial share for itself (14,850 metric tons or 21 per cent of the total allowable catch).

Petrified prehistoric plants

Two stromatolite algae blocks dated at about 1.5 billion years were recently found on the property of the Great Lakes Paper Company next to a logging road near Disraeli Lake about 70 miles northeast of Thunder Bay, Ontario.

The fossils, known as "Conophyton", occur in the Precambrian Sibley Group, and will go on permanent display in the invertebrate palaeontology gallery of Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum when renovations to the gallery are finished.

The collection of the two specimens (the largest weighs over a ton) and transportation of them to the ROM were made possible through the assistance of the Great Lakes Paper Company. Employees of the Company collected and transported the two blocks without any damage whatsoever to the rocks.

Dr. Desmond Collins, curator of the Department of Invertebrate Palaeontology, said that Precambrian life would be a focal point in the renovated gallery, where the stromatolites would be a major display.



Stromatolite algae blocks dated at about 1.5 billion years, found recently,

will be a permanent exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.