

From the 1950s to the 1970s, foreign fleets inflicted massive damage on fisheries resources off Canada's Atlantic coast. Canada seized the opportunity then before us and played a critical role in creating the international legal basis for the 200-mile zone under the Law of the Sea.

In that great effort, Canada was represented by an outstanding team, led by one of our most accomplished diplomats and international jurists, Mr. Alan Beesley. Canada has need once more of his skills and determination on these matters.

I am pleased and proud to announce today that, on a recommendation from the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Honourable Tom Siddon, and myself, the Prime Minister has created a senior position in the Government of Canada, Ambassador for Marine Conservation, and has appointed Mr. Alan Beesley to that new position.

Mr. Beesley's mandate will be to marshal the resources of the Government of Canada, in cooperation with provincial governments and representatives of the industry and fishermen, toward the goal of ending foreign overfishing.

In this task, Mr. Beesley will report directly to Mr. Clark, Mr. Siddon and myself. He will draw on all the talent and resources that he needs from the Departments of External Affairs and International Trade and Fisheries and Oceans. He will combine these duties with another important and related function, that of Special Advisor on Environmental Affairs to Mr. Clark.

Mr. Beesley is undertaking his new duties at a critical time. While the level of overfishing by foreign fleets outside 200 miles is far less than the levels that took place outside 12 miles in the 1960s and early 1970s, nonetheless current levels of foreign overfishing are damaging fish stocks of importance to Canada.

As an example, I would note the precipitous declines in total allowable catches (TAC's) for flatfish on the Southern Grand Banks. The quotas set by NAFO for the three major flatfish stocks in this area totalled 75,000 tonnes in 1986. For 1990, the total of the TAC's for these stocks is only 34,900 tonnes. That is a reduction of more than 50 per cent in only four years.

These declines are caused not only by the taking of excessive tonnages, but by the massive harvesting of immature fish. For example, a random sample of flatfish recently found in the hold of a Spanish trawler yielded a total weight of 113 pounds for 275 fish. The average weight of these fish was 6.6 ounces and their average length was 6.8 inches.