

problems, be it in ensuring that fish that was exported is now kept in the country and perhaps finding new buyers for facilities, is the sort of thing that our colleague has been undertaking.

I was going to read into the record some figures from previous response programs, but Madam Speaker is telling me I have very little time. I will not go into the \$20 million that has been spent in emergency response in Newfoundland in the last three years.

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate this afternoon.

• (1700)

Since the early 1980s, the reality has been unprecedented growth in employment in the fishery sector, both in harvesting and in processing in the Atlantic region. I would like to read you some figures that the minister has made available recently. He said, for Atlantic Canada from 1983 to 1988, landings of all fish species increased by 200,000 tonnes to 1.3 million tonnes. The total landed value increased by \$400 million to over \$1 billion during that same period. The total value of processed fish products increased by \$750 million, to \$2.2 billion in 1988.

We do have to face the reality that employment, the commercial activity, the economy of the fisheries resource in Atlantic Canada has, by and large, been at a high level of performance. As well, until recent months, perhaps, over the past year, the resources themselves, the natural fish stocks seem to have been sufficiently abundant to support that exploitation. It is only recently that we have become starkly aware of at least three major resource problems which will no longer sustain the expectations we have placed upon those resources.

First, there has been a gathering momentum of decline for several years in the groundfish stocks, particularly in the Nova Scotia waters, which has come to a shocking realization in recent months. As well, there has been a sharp drop in snow crab stocks, particularly in the New Brunswick and Quebec areas. Of course we are all familiar with the new information which we have concerning the northern cod populations.

Supply

As has been man's custom for centuries, we have continued to increase our expectations and our harvest so long as the resource seemed to be available. Now we confront the reality of the inevitable cycle, too much capacity.

I would like to quote from a report by the capacity committee which the minister, in co-operation with the industry helped to establish. Since 1987, they have been working to develop a proposed plan to cope with overcapacity in the groundfish fleet. Their conclusions state that the groundfish fleet already has twice the fishing power it needs. If the approximately 1,000 vessels licensed for groundfish but now fishing other species should return to groundfish, the fleet would have four times the fishing power it needs. As groundfish abundance has declined, quotas have dropped over the last seven years by about 40 per cent or 88,000 tonnes. That catch, if it were to be increased today, would be worth more than \$60 million to the 2,700 groundfish boats in the Scotia—Fundy region.

As well, I would like to read from a quotation from Dr. Harris who did a study earlier this year about the northern cod situation. He says:

We must be absolutely clear that failure to take appropriate steps to reduce current levels of fishing mortality will most probably lead to a significant decline in the spawning population of northern cod over the next several years.

He goes on to say this, and I think this is pivotal:

Whatever management is taken, the panel recommends that the guiding principle must be the imperative necessity for an increase in the size of the spawning population.

What that really addresses is the subject of management of the resource. The government, contrary to the motion, has already commenced to act in that regard and, with specific reference to northern cod, the funding for scientific research will be increased this year by 80 per cent. The expanded research effort will increase from the current \$3.8 million budget by an additional \$3 million. That is hardly action consistent with the negative implications of this resolution.

I would like to talk for a few minutes about the management of the resource itself and about that phrase that we hear so much about today, sustainable development.

Yesterday I was privileged to be part of a legislative committee that reported a bill to this House which, perhaps, for the first time in Canadian legislation con-