

Private Members' Business

Canada took the lead in pursuing this goal by convening an international conference of Law of the Sea experts in St. John's in September 1990. The experts agreed on certain fundamental principles, including that: members of the international community whose nationals fish in areas of the high seas must co-operate with each other and the adjacent coastal states on conservation including enforcement and dispute settlement; members of regional fisheries organizations have a duty to ensure that their nationals comply with all conservation measures, and that they do not resort to techniques such as reflagging of vessels to escape controls; distant fishing nations must ensure that fishing by their nationals on the high seas does not have an adverse effect on the living resources under the jurisdiction of coastal states; the management regime applied to the high-seas portion of stocks should be consistent with the management regime of the coastal states applicable in its exclusive economic zone.

I can assure the members of this House that this government will continue to work toward that objective through its legal initiative and other initiatives for global co-operation, to the benefit of Canadians and of all people who depend upon the oceans' resources, in this generation and in future generations.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The designated hour will end at 6.02 p.m. Therefore I recognize the hon. member for Davenport.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, in the limited time available I would like to make a couple of points on this very interesting saga of the northern cod which also has some very dramatic social and economic implications.

First let me draw the attention of the House to the report entitled *Independent Review of the State of the Northern Cod Stock* that was produced in February 1990. It was signed by prominent Canadians knowledgeable in the field of northern cod. The panel consisted of Dr. Harris of Memorial University, D. L. Alverson, John Pope, Maxfield Short, Frank Smith, Mary Lou Peters and Robert Fournier.

What was their first recommendation? It read in respect of the northern cod stocks that as a matter of urgency there should be an immediate reduction of fishing mortality to the level of .3 and at the earliest

possible date to the level of .2. This was in February 1990.

It took the government two years to act on that recommendation. It was in February 1992 when finally that recommendation was partially acted upon. Why it would take that long is beyond me to understand. When I hear the member for Fraser Valley East speak about government efforts at promoting sustainable development I really wonder what he is talking about.

Second, an interesting aspect of government policy on this matter that may prove the point made by my colleagues from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception and Cape Breton—East Richmond is that the minister of fisheries seems to be operating in some kind of isolation and impotence. In his news release of January 10, 1992 the minister said:

• (1800)

Canada is calling for international support for principles and measures within the framework of the Law of the Sea convention toward ending overfishing of straddling stocks outside 200 miles.

I applaud him. That statement is highly desirable because article 63 of the Law of the Sea convention exhorts the coastal states and fishing states to seek to agree on conservation measures for straddling stocks.

The question is: Why is Canada not ratifying the Law of the Sea? How come the minister is left to invoke the Law of the Sea in the name of his mandate while the Secretary of State for External Affairs is not acting upon the ratification of the Law of the Sea? Canada was among the first nations to sign it but as you know, Mr. Speaker, there are two steps: the signature and then the ratification.

The Law of the Sea cannot come into effect and cannot become operative unless 60 nations ratify it. At this stage some 53 or 54 nations have ratified that convention. It is a very important one. According to article 63 it would permit the initiation of a number of conservation initiatives among states.

Why is Canada not ratifying the Law of the Sea? It is very relevant to the fine initiative taken today by my colleague from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception. His initiative is one of breaking an impasse, of moving in a certain direction searching for an answer. It may be the one proposed by the hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception. It may be a modification of it. We do not know exactly where we will ultimately end. Certainly