

Adjournment Debate

simply not bothered to respond, most probably because he does not have an adequate explanation for his actions.

To virtually ignore the people of Isle Madame, to refuse to listen to their heartfelt concerns about the survival of their community and their way of life, represents the most dangerous form of arrogance and self-satisfaction on the part of the minister of fisheries.

In their communication with the minister the representatives of Richmond Fisheries and the people of Petit de Gras and Isle Madame have shown a tremendous degree of restraint. At a time when they could be angry and contemptuous of the minister, they have remained cool and collected. They have done so, because they realize the continued existence of their community may depend on their ability to convince this minister that he is dead wrong and that the results of his folly could be catastrophic.

Let me quote from correspondence sent to the minister by a community action committee in Petit de Gras, formed for the reasons I have just cited.

In a letter dated February 22, they write in the most plain and simple language as follows: "Our economic welfare is at stake and its fate is in your hands. The 1991 management plan, should it remain as it is, will destroy the economy of Isle Madame. We are not asking, Mr. Minister, for gifts of money, nor are we asking for make-work projects or grants or assistance packages".

Indeed they are not. They are asking for an enterprise allocation for Richmond Fisheries which is more in line with the total allowable catch for the 4T-VN region. Is this asking very much? Why is the minister doing this to Richmond Fisheries and to the people of Isle Madame? Again, I quote from the community action committee's correspondence:

We submit to you, Mr. Minister, that Richmond Fisheries is the model for the survival of the industry. On the capacity issue, look at the number of destructive bottom drag licences they have taken out of the fishery. Look further at their total compliance and agreement in stock-preserving cuts that have been applied to certain troubled quotas. Study carefully the rate of observer coverage maintained by Richmond Fisheries and compare it to any other element in the 4T-VN fishery. Seek out, if you can, any other operation which has an in-house, totally reserved, D.F.O. inspection team.

Richmond Fisheries is a model for the industry to follow, and yet it is being forced to tie up its trawlers and

lay off its employees simply because the minister, for some unknown reason, has it in for them. Why? Why does he seem to harbour a grudge against Richmond Fisheries? They and the people of Isle Madame who rely on Richmond Fisheries have shown the minister courtesy time and time again.

The minister has taken this disastrous decision in contravention of his own management plan, in contravention of all available scientific evidence and despite the urgent and reasonable appeals made by Richmond Fisheries and the people of Isle Madame for him to consider.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the hon. member that it may be that the answer given by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans or by myself may not be the one that the members in his community of Richmond or Isles Madame are looking for or can provide comfort to them. That may be. That is not to say, though, that the minister has ignored them or that he is arrogant or that he has singled them out.

I think it is grossly unfair for the member, who I think understands, to accuse the minister just because he cannot provide the kind of an answer he wants. He is accusing him of ignoring them or of being arrogant or having other things to do. I do want to provide an answer. Again, it may not be the answer that the constituents whom he represents are looking for, especially in the short term. I do think it is the answer in the long term.

The 1991 groundfish management plan has provided a reasonable balance between the conservation of the resource and stability for participants in the industry and for the economy of Atlantic Canada. The total allowable catch, the TAC for the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence cod in are 4T-VN, January to April portion was reduced from 53,000 tonnes in 1990 to 48,000 tonnes in 1991 and 43,000 tonnes for the years 1992 and 1993.

The decision to reduce the TAC for this stock was based on scientific information which suggests that most of the cod harvested in the deep waters of 4-VN during the period January to April originate from 4-T. The reduction in the offshore share was undertaken to preserve the cod stock at 4-T, as 4-VN, JA and 4-T are both part of one large cod stock.