

N.W. Atlantic Fisheries Convention Act

At that meeting we were told that the catch of codfish has declined by 50 per cent in the last five years. We were told that haddock stocks were decimated almost to the point of no return. We were told that European countries were now concentrating on the flat fish, yellowtail, flounder, sole and such species, and that if the overfishing continues these particular species too will soon be decimated. At that meeting they presented certain resolutions which I think should be placed on the records of this House because their suggestions and their proposals are worthy of consideration by the government. They suggested, and I quote:

Speed up the phasing out period of all foreign activity in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In the process there should be discussions with the Canadian fishing industry on the Canadian aims in dealing with the St. Pierre question and how it relates to the eventual control and management of the continental shelf.

Enforce the 12 mile limit immediately in all areas around the Newfoundland and Labrador coastline and zone or "box off" certain important areas on the east coast for the exclusive use of in-shore fishermen during certain periods of the year.

Obviously, this is not being done. They also recommended that the government exclude gill net fishing from all off-shore banks. Again, I quote:

Discuss with Iceland, Norway and Denmark immediately Iceland's proposal to implement the 50 mile limit which is to be effective in September 1972. Also discuss the plans of the other two countries to follow similar action. We believe this will be a very useful exercise in determining what areas the Icelanders, the Norwegians, the Danes and the Canadians can work together toward achieving the common aim of extension of management control over their respective continental shelves.

Either close out all fishing activity on Hamilton Inlet Bank during the pre-spawning and spawning season for a minimum period of three years or implement immediately a crash quota system to apply for the 1972 fishery and to continue in existence until sufficient research is carried out to determine what quantity of fish can be safely taken annually from this stock and still maintain a maximum sustainable yield.

Close off all fishing activity during the haddock spawning period on the Southern Grand Banks where haddock concentrate for spawning and restrict fishing activity along the western slope of the Grand Banks during the haddock migration period. This action to facilitate the recovery of this important species for which scientists have so little hope at the present time.

Implement sea and air surveillance on whatever scale is necessary to establish the level of activity on our continental shelf and to locate this facility where it can effectively do the job. This type of surveillance is necessary to determine what effort is required in this direction for effective management control on the shelf. This facility should also incorporate the Air Sea Rescue Service which is now totally inadequate to do the job.

Step up research on critical species such as cod, flounder, redfish and haddock in all areas to determine what action is required to maintain sustainable yields. The knowledge of quantities that can be safely taken from fish stocks will bring stability to the industry by determining the fishing effort required and the number of shore jobs which the industry can support. If this knowledge had been available and acted on in the past we would not be here today, stated the groups spokesman!

• (4:20 p.m.)

Make known to the foreign fishing nations our strongest objection to gang fishing which is not only contributing to overfishing but in some cases presents a definite hazard to the lives of Canadian fishermen.

Continue discussions with the Danes and take every possible measure to eliminate high seas fishing for salmon.

Canada should make its position absolutely clear at the 1973 Law of the Sea Conference that Canada as a coastal state will not

accept anything less than full management control over the marine resources on the continental shelf by the end of 1973.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the basis of the brief presented to the three ministers on Friday morning. It is a well worded brief and contains some very definite suggestions which we in the Official Opposition endorse. In view of the serious economic conditions faced by the people in Atlantic Canada as a result of the decline in our fisheries resources, I urge the minister to give careful consideration to these well thought out proposals. If acted upon they should be helpful to Canada in establishing our position when we come before the 1973 Law of the Sea Conference where, hopefully, we can gain some control over these fisheries resources which are so important to our people in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister has already spoken and, of course, at this stage of the proceedings may speak again if members give unanimous consent. Is there such consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. MacLean: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before the minister closes the debate, perhaps I might ask him if he would indicate to the House what countries so far have passed legislation which will allow enforcement officials of other countries to board their vessels? In other words, what countries have passed legislation comparable to this?

Mr. Davis: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) asked several questions. An important one was whether the international convention for the North Atlantic organization failed in its duty, as outlined in its terms of reference, to conserve the fish stocks of the north Atlantic. I think a short answer has to be, yes, it has failed in its duty. It has failed to conserve the fishery resources of waters commonly described as the high seas.

As a nation, we have extended our own exclusive limits. We have included all of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, all of the bays and inlets around our coast and 12 miles out to sea beyond that. Still we have not covered the largest continental shelf in the world and our own immensely productive shelf off Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

The North Atlantic convention for the conservation of fish stocks has failed to protect those stocks, has failed miserably in a number of cases. It has failed badly in respect of haddock and may be failing in respect of other groundfish species. The mighty cod is either at the point of maximum sustainable yield or has been pushed beyond it. In other words, there is excessive pressure on our ground fishery. Stocks and catches have been failing in recent years.

Having said that International Convention of countries that fish commercially in the North Atlantic has failed in the past 22 years, I owe it to the convention to ask the question whether it can recover its balance and in future do the sort of job it was originally designed to do and asked to do. I think the answer is yes—a qualified yes, if it can have the authority, if all the countries fishing in the north Atlantic will back it or, as is more likely to be the case, it can be used as a medium for negotiating agreements resulting in certain practices such as reducing the