

## New policy proposed to bolster Atlantic fishery

The federal government has committed \$198 million over the next five years to implement the recommendations made in the final report of the Task Force on Atlantic Fisheries released February 17.

The task force, under the chairmanship of Michael Kirby, was set up in January 1982 to study "how to achieve and maintain a viable Atlantic fishing industry, with due consideration for the over-all economic and social development of the Atlantic provinces".

The task force received submissions from 90 groups and individuals, held about 135 meetings and visited some 40 communities throughout the Atlantic region.

### Objectives accepted

The federal government has accepted as federal policy objectives for the Atlantic fisheries the objectives set out in the report, entitled *Navigating Troubled Waters*. The objectives are:

— The Atlantic fishing industry should be economically viable on an ongoing basis, where to be viable implies an ability to survive downturns with only a normal business failure rate and without government assistance.

— Employment in the Atlantic fishing industry should be maximized subject to the constraint that those employed receive a reasonable income as a result of fishery-related activities, including fishery-related income transfer payments.

— Fish within the 200-mile Canadian zone should be harvested and processed by Canadians in firms owned by Canadians wherever this is consistent with the aforementioned objectives and with Canada's international treaty obligations.

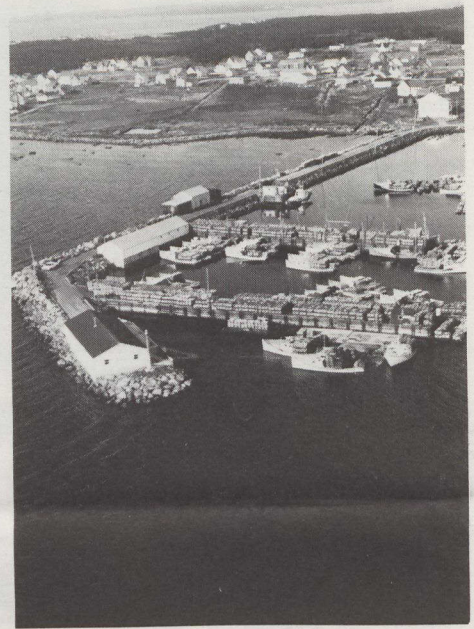
### Room for improvement

"We have access to some of the world's best markets for fish, both in Canada and the United States and elsewhere. Somehow we have not turned that potential into a healthy viable industry which can provide a good living for the people and the communities who depend on it. There clearly is enormous scope for improvement and that is what our new fisheries policy is designed to achieve," said Fisheries and Oceans Minister Pierre De Bané in announcing funding to implement the fisheries policy.

The federal government accepted 50 of the 57 recommendations made by the task force and promised both manpower and funding over a five-year period including \$120 million for annual operating expenditures and \$78 million for capital grants and contributions. A total of \$28.3 million of that money will be spent on advertising to promote Atlantic products at home and abroad.

Some of the federally approved proposals include:

— changes in the system of calculating unemployment benefits for fishermen based on their "ten best weeks" of fishing



*A fishing port just before the lobster fishing season opens, Ile de Cap de Sable, Shelburne, Nova Scotia.*

rather than their ten last weeks;

— that foreign fleets wanting to fish in Canadian waters be given allocations based on past performance and no promises of lower tariff prices for Canadian exports;

— upgrading the quality of the product by dockside grading as well as by mandatory gutting, bleeding, washing and icing of groundfish at sea, rather than on shore;

— a system to give fishing licences to individuals rather than to boats. These quotas could be sold or traded much the same way dairy quotas are exchanged. This proposal is designed to end the seasonal race to catch as much as possible in a short time;

— allocation of fish delivery for "resource-short" plants (those that sit empty in the off-season) by either fish companies or consortia; and

— allowing the Canadian Saltfish Corporation to buy, process and market fish in northern Newfoundland, Labrador and the Quebec north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The corporation would also be allowed to buy processing plants.

The task force has one more piece of work to complete before disbanding. It is representing the federal government in negotiations on the financial restructuring of certain financially troubled trawler companies based in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The other parties involved in those negotiations are the companies themselves, financial institutions and provincial governments.



*A partial view of the port of St. John's, Newfoundland with the village in the background.*

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