

As you know, Mr. Speaker, until now, measures to control seal populations have been constrained by concerns regarding possible effects on markets for fish products arising from anti-sealing groups. However, representatives of the fishing industry have been unanimous in their advice that, notwithstanding the concerns with respect to markets, measures should now be taken to start bringing the seal population under control.

The Government of Canada is committed to the rational management of all marine resources based on the principles of conservation and sustainable development.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the establishment of a conservation ceiling of Canadian catches for 1992 of 120,000 tonnes, in effect a TAC reduction of 65,000 tonnes, is a severe measure. It goes beyond the 25,000-tonne reduction suggested by CAF-SAC because, in light of the circumstances, more stringent measures to protect fisheries resources are needed.

The management arrangements for 1992 that I have described are of an interim nature. Other measures to improve our understanding of the resource, especially predator-prey relationships and oceanographic factors, will be pursued urgently. Many details have to be worked out. This will be done in co-operation with the fishing industry, unions and provincial governments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tremblay (Québec-Est)): I understand that the hon. member for Gaspé is sharing his time with his colleague, the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. But before that, I will give the floor to the hon. member for Malpeque for questions and comments.

[*English*]

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to the hon. member. I have a question for him but before posing the question I would like to make a couple of comments.

I am very pleased today to support this motion before us because foreign overfishing is costing Atlantic Canadians thousands of jobs. In the Atlantic provinces the fisheries employ over 100,000 people. That is a lot of jobs. On top of that, they employ roughly 8,000 in coastal Quebec.

Supply

Foreign overfishing is a very serious problem and it is one that the federal government has to address now. The fact is that while Newfoundlanders and other Atlantic Canadians are losing their jobs, foreigners are fishing hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fish off our east coast far in excess of the quotas that have been set for them.

This government's lack of action in this area is hard to understand. It simply ignores the needs of Atlantic fishermen.

Another example of ignoring the needs of fishermen is in a recent proposal to change the boat safety regulations. This is a proposal which is causing a great deal of concern to fishermen in my area, Prince Edward Island, because these new regulations call for fishermen to equip their boats with life rafts, with survival suits for each fisherman and with a second set of running lights.

I know that all fishermen would agree safety is the primary concern. There is no question about that. Most fishermen are happy to abide by sensible safety regulations. I underline the word sensible because this proposal does not make sense in a lot of situations. Why would an oyster fisherman be required to carry a life raft in a boat that is too small to hold it in the first place?

I use that as an example to illustrate how out of touch this government has become with the needs of fishermen.

Would the member agree with me that government's lack of action now in dealing with the whole issue of foreign overfishing simply demonstrates the government's lack of concern for fishermen in Atlantic Canada?

An hon. member: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marin: Mr. Speaker, I understand the frustration and the conflicts which can arise in fishing communities where resources are increasingly scarce. It will be hard for me to agree that the ultimate responsibility lies with the government, whatever it is, for inaction.

I would take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank my colleague who asked the question. She is getting up to leave the House before I have answered her.