

Supply

Do we begin to even understand what this debate is all about? We want to be able to practise our work ethic again. We want first crack at the fish that brought us to these shores five centuries ago.

We are the only Canadians who came into this country by voting to come into it. I was not born a Canadian. My father and mother were not born Canadians. My brothers and sisters were not born Canadians. We voted to embrace a nation. And we want now from that nation we embraced four decades ago, a bit of fairness because we have not been getting it on this issue.

We have become pawns in a larger game, a game that dictated for five whole years, from 1985 to 1990, a shameful silence on this issue. Nobody at the national level spoke up for this issue. Why? Because fish resources during that period were judged to be easy trade-offs for big ticket items with the European Community and an easy trade-off for inflated egos as well.

But now the chickens have come home to roost. The disaster is at our door. It is not just at the doors of the people who are having difficulty putting bread and butter on the table in rural Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, but it is at our door as a Parliament and at our door as a government.

If we fail to act on this one, we are not worth our salt. If we allow a people to be destroyed, if we allow one of our great national industries, equal in magnitude to the great auto industry of this country, to be decimated, if we allow our sovereignty to continue to be trampled, if we allow a great marine resource to be pillaged beyond retrieval, what are we doing here? The disaster is at our door, but so is the solution, the only solution.

I understand that my friend, the minister of fisheries, has tried other options. Knowing him I know he has pursued those options with great vigour, great enthusiasm and great commitment. For that I have commended him often both publicly and privately. But I believe in his heart of hearts, as he has indicated in some of his unguarded moments, he knows there is only one solution and it is contained in this resolution.

He knows and I know that solution will not be easy, but I have never seen this government back away from solutions that are not easy.

The government knew when it took on the free trade issue—and we were on different sides on that one but I use it as an example—that it was not an easy fight, but it was committed to it and saw it through.

I was not on the government's side on the GST, but I use it as an example of another fight that it took on because it, for whatever reason, believed in it and saw it through.

So do not give me the argument back that we cannot do it because it is not very easy to do. It is going to be painfully difficult to do, but it has to be done.

I see my time has run out so in conclusion, as my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood has just said, we are all in this together.

We have focused on this issue six ways to Sunday. No matter how good Canada's conservation, no matter how well it regulates its own fishery, no matter how good the compensation package for people who are deprived of incomes out there, and there has to be a good compensation package, no matter how well we regulate the inshore, no matter how fairly we apportion licences, all of that is going to be by the board if we do not come to grips with this central problem.

On this one I say to the minister and the Prime Minister, they have the goodwill of every member of this House and of all well-intentioned Canadians. I ask him to rise, support the motion and then let us begin the admittedly difficult task of putting the decision into effect for the good of those people to save that way of life and for the good of Canada.

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, two years ago the hon. member for Burin—St. George's took me and one of our senators throughout his riding which covers most of the south coast of Newfoundland.

We visited the Codroy region, Stephenville, but what will always be etched in my memory is our visits to four fishing areas: Ramea, Grey River, Gaultois, Baine Harbour. Two years ago these communities were closing down. The fish plants were either working at a very low capacity or no capacity at all.

The member for Burin—St. George's had us meet with many of these people. We asked the question: Can we retrain people? I was full of optimism that we might