



Minister  
Fisheries and Environment Canada

Ministre  
Pêches et Environnement Canada

NOTES FOR A SPEECH  
BY THE HONOURABLE ROMEO LEBLANC  
MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
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I find myself in a position somewhat unfamiliar to Canadian Fisheries Ministers - coming to Newfoundland to talk about happy things. The big difference, of course, is the 200-mile limit. Extended jurisdiction at last lets me speak to you in terms of opportunity. Opportunity, not only for Atlantic fishermen - though lord knows they are overdue for some of that - but for the whole Atlantic economy.

While bringing a message of good cheer, I also want to do my bit to offset complacency. In the fall of 1975, to quote my favorite author, myself, I told an audience of fishermen in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, that by gaining a zone we might lose an excuse. In June, 1976, when here in St. John's I announced the forthcoming 200-mile limit, I warned again that it would produce no immediate bonanza. The limit means nothing unless we use it right. Reaping its full advantages will take time and care.

But even when we take this cautious perspective, the new zone still looks good. The future of Newfoundland fisheries is at last bright, because of the nation's new powers. For 200 miles out, there will be fisheries management by Canadians, for Canadians.

I mean "management" in the sense of replacing chance with control, blind sailing with good navigation, uncertainty about the future with a reasonable degree of predictability.

The new zone offers only potential, we cannot take its promise for granted. The promise is nevertheless real. Even when we take into account all the biological limitations on fish stocks, the thousands of square miles now under our control represent a vast new wealth. Of Atlantic groundfish alone, the new zone holds about 800,000 tons available for catching, which our management should increase half again, to 1,200,000 tons, by the early 1980's. We can use the wealth of the new zone well, misuse it, or pretend we never even wanted it. For the federal government's part, however, we didn't go through the pains of getting this limit to let it be wasted.

The fishery resources are a common property, held in trust for the citizens of Newfoundland and of all Canada. It is our duty to manage them in the country's best interests. We can allocate fish, control their use, make this resource serve Canadian society, particularly Canadian fishermen, to the fullest possible extent.

Chaos, collision of interest, action taken at cross-purposes - these forces have robbed Canadian fishermen in the past, for instance in the paralysis that sometimes afflicted ICNAF's valiant attempts at management. The federal government has the responsibility to make sure that such forces do not operate within the 200-mile zone. The fish are not Nova Scotia fish, or the fish of New Brunswick, or Quebec or Newfoundland fish. They cannot be managed that way. They are a national asset and there will be a national management. There will be a Canadian approach,

Canadian management, Canadian policies. Arrived at, to be sure, in consultation with provincial governments, with fishermen, and with the industry. But arrived at, too, with an eye on goals that are bigger than individual corporate gain, interests that transcend local or provincial boundaries.

The federal presence in the Atlantic fisheries is real and strong. There are some 770 people in the Newfoundland region alone. That very competent team will soon occupy the new Newfoundland Fisheries and Environment Center here in St. John's, one of the finest buildings of its kind in the world in which the federal government is investing \$38.5 million. It goes without saying that effort of this scale must be protected on its flanks by unity of purpose.

I have spoken of management and its aspects: conservation, allocation, all the rest. Let me discuss how this applies to an area of primary concern: the northeast Newfoundland - Labrador fishery, based on the northern cod stock. Once these fish were the foundation of fisheries income in northern Newfoundland. Overfishing by foreign fleets badly eroded that foundation.

Step one in rebuilding northern cod is to assemble information. We need to know how to utilize this stock, how much fish we can safely take. We know a fair amount about northern cod already. I might add that we are also increasing our research effort. Our scientists and supporting staff who work on Atlantic stock assessment will increase from 200 to 275 this year; their budget, including money for a new research vessel, will go up 167 per cent next year.

With research information, we set what the scientific jargon calls a TAC: a Total Allowable Catch. Three years ago, ICNAF set the catch level for northern cod at 660,000 tons. This year, the figure is 160,000 tons. For 1978, you can expect to see the level again drop substantially. This is what needs to happen if we want to rebuild the stocks at a rate that is both good for the resource and good for the Canadian fishermen.

Who gets the first crack at these fish? Here I must say, as I have said publicly before, that I have a clear bias for the inshore fisherman. Not because of some romantic regard, not because of his picture on the calendars, but because he cannot travel far after fish, because he depends on fishing for his income, because his community in turn depends on his fishery being protected.

For the inshore fishermen of northern cod, from the newly lowered level, we will set aside a generous estimate of what they can catch. Last year they caught 60,000 tons; we are expecting that they will catch more this year, and that we will be setting aside higher amounts each year for them.

That still leaves some cod to be shared. Next on the scale of priorities are the Canadian offshore boats. We calculate how much this fleet can actually take, and we assign it to them. But right now, the Canadian mobile fleet cannot take all the remaining cod.

This remainder, as you probably know, we allocate to foreign fishing nations. Their share of northern cod has of course dropped dramatically - from about 540,000 tons in 1974 to about 90,000 tons this year. It will be much less again in 1978, and will, if our Canadian fishery develops as it should, diminish in a few years to zero.

I know that the very idea of letting the foreigners have any cod upsets and worries many Newfoundland fishermen. This in spite of their knowledge that the sharing of stocks unfished by the coastal state, allocated according to the judgment of the coastal state, is a well-established principle in the international consensus on the Law of the Sea, the consensus that helped us extend jurisdiction without opposition. The fishermen generally accept the principle of sharing, for other fish stocks. They realize there are thousands of tons of argentine, thousands of tons of roundnose grenadier, for which we have no market and no fishery. They accept our allocation of these species to foreigners, rather than letting them go to waste. For northern cod, however, many fishermen oppose any sharing.

I sympathize with their emotions. I know what cod has meant to the history of Newfoundland. I know how the cod have declined on the northeast coast. I know that even the cod from far-away Hamilton Inlet Bank, off Labrador, help supply the northeast Newfoundland fishery.

On the day that Canadian fishermen can harvest the full production from that or any stock, there will no longer be foreign fishing for that stock. Under those circumstances, there will be no surplus. No one, least of all the foreign fishing nations, disputes this fact. There are no secret clauses to our agreements.

But today, there are fish that we do not take. It is in our best interest to assign this portion to carefully-controlled foreign fishing, and for more reasons than Law of the Sea principles.

At this point I can almost hear someone ask "Why should we? Why not let the stock rebuild that much faster?"

It looks tempting but there are hooks in that bait.

Although Canada's fisheries jurisdiction ends at 200 miles, Canada's fishing hopes and opportunities do not. There are valuable stocks straddling the 200-mile line and beyond it. We have a stake in the well-being of that resource. We still need cooperation from foreign fleets to protect these stocks for our future use. Not to mention our interest in protecting our present fishery, every major stock of fish on the Grand Bank crosses the 200-mile line. Our Newfoundland trawler fleet has a major fishery outside 200 miles. If we refuse to share available fish within the zone, a sharing under our control, we could suffer worse from an uncontrolled fishery outside the zone. I realize that sharing fish from within the zone is less than popular; to create chaos outside the zone by a dog-in-the-manger attitude would be even more unpopular.

At no time in our progress toward the 200-mile limit have we considered using our jurisdiction as a guillotine - to end all foreign fishing at a stroke. Such a policy would put no more fish in our nets and it would have provided no incentive for foreign cooperation.

Even if there were no fish out beyond 200 miles, it would still be unwise to refuse access to fish we cannot take. The prospects for the future are unlimited - and they include export prospects - we are not going to eat all that fish ourselves. We can become the world's number one exporter of fish. But slamming the door in the face of the world is simply not a sensible course of action.

I think that is enough in one speech about foreign fishing. It's 1977 now, not 1967, and foreign fishing is no longer the determinant of our destiny. What matters most is what we ourselves do.

The greatest single dividend of the 200-mile zone is an ability to look ahead. We can count on the fish. With this certainty, we can also lay plans to use the fish better, and we can plan to help those who suffered most from the years of over-fishing: the small man, the inshore man, with his own boat, with his self-reliance, with his entire heritage as a hard-working Newfoundland fishermen, a heritage that the former lack of fisheries control off our coast was well on the way to destroying. We are going to build up the northern cod stocks, and we are going to build up the inshore fishery.



Our 1977 plan for the Atlantic groundfish fishery was the first attempt to conduct the Canadian fisheries according to plan - our first opportunity to escape from those famous "circumstances beyond our control".

As the 1977 plan shows, we resist, as a matter of bedrock policy, any proposal that would create a disadvantage for the Canadian inshore fishermen. Part of our plan calls for taking pressure off inshore fishermen.

- First, by allocating resources between offshore and inshore fleets so as to prevent conflict.
- Second, by encouraging, with dollars, the offshore vessels to become more mobile - more far-ranging.

But there is more to fisheries prosperity than full nets. The intelligent way to pursue prosperity is to increase not just the catch, but the return per pound of that catch.

Part of our plan is to upgrade fish quality. Simply by doing better on quality, we know we can raise the value of Newfoundland's inshore catch - without catching one extra cod - by some \$20 million.

In 200 Newfoundland ports, which handle 85 or 90 per cent of inshore groundfish landings, we are building a modern integrated system for getting the catch rapidly and efficiently from the sea to the supermarket. This program, to cost \$13 million over four years, is a direct result of recommendations made to us by inshore fishermen at a series of meetings last year.

The bottom line is that fishermen will have more top-quality fish to sell, and plants will have more of it to process. I hope that we can move soon to a premium price for premium quality fish on the part of buyers as we have tried to do with our subsidies.

The new fish-handling system, and other initiatives, affect the inshore fisheries of all Newfoundland. We have in addition a special program, with several aspects, to help the northeast Newfoundland and Labrador inshore fishery in particular. Beginning this year, we will build up the catching capability of inshore fishermen in Notre Dame Bay and further north, including the Labrador coast. Here, more than 300 longliners use the traditional fishing methods for groundfish, cod traps, gill nets, longlines, and so on. Since the 1960's, their landings and earnings have been declining, mainly because of lack of fish, compounded by outmoded fishing methods.

We'll spend about a half million dollars this year to test and demonstrate new fishing techniques for these vessels, to help them diversify into using Danish seine and European pair bottom trawl methods for fishing groundfish, and purse seines for capelin and herring. A main objective is to increase the cod catching capability of the inshore fishermen.

We will expand our commercial scallop survey in Labrador. This project, begun in 1975, has had promising results.

There will be a special effort in the processing of saltfish on the Labrador coast.

We will also set up an extension program. Advisors with practical knowledge in the new gear and boat technologies and the processing of pickled and salt fish will travel the northeast coast and Labrador to work directly with fishermen.

All these projects - and this is just the beginning - will proceed in consultation with fishermen. Advisory committees of fishermen and processors will help us bring in new developments in the northern fishery. Here as elsewhere, I should tell you, we are not coming down from the mountain with new commandments or grandiose graphs and charts and blueprints for the entire fishery. I find around me today an embarrassment of consultants and officials who want to plan ten years ahead. The people of the northeast coast can't wait ten years. I'm increasingly in favor of giving the planners some competition, with a bit of intelligent ad hockery. We tried this with the Bay of Fundy herring fishery in my own province and Nova Scotia, and we're on the way to doubling the value of the purse seine fishery in two short years. Planning far into the future is fine, but I'm reminded of the fellow who was said to be so preoccupied with heaven, he was no earthly good.

Fishing should continue to be a free enterprise industry. But like any industry, its survival depends on its ability to change with the times.

We need, for instance, to coordinate the pattern of fish landings. The kind of arrangement we have now, by which trucks loaded with fish drive by three idle plants to deliver the catch to a plant sixty miles away, already working overtime - is not rational.

We need a system that works more evenly. One for instance in which trawlers take their catches to ports selected on the basis of the need at processing plants ashore. If I should approve more than the one Canada-foreign fishing arrangement so far authorized - and my attitude remains one of caution - such a plan for coordinated landings might well be a condition of the venture.

A goal in which I have long had a personal interest is stretching the fisheries calendar. We should not accept it as an unalterable fact that we are totally at the mercy of climate. I have asked our Department and the Ministry of Transport to examine the feasibility of using icebreakers to keep some northern Newfoundland ports open longer. This is still in the exploratory stage, but the possibilities are exciting. The ultimate objective, if it did prove feasible, would be to keep idle plants working - not to add new wings to busy ones - and the ports and roads kept open would be chosen with that aim in mind.

The fishing industry will, I hope, make the necessary changes to live up to the new opportunities. Probably we all need to reexamine some attitudes. I detect a more open approach in my recent contacts with industry representatives. As they and the fishermen know by now, I am firmly convinced that the fishery is a triple partnership: fish processors and their representatives, fishermen and their organizations, and government. The exact mix is an open question. For my government's part, I do not look for occasions of territorial expansion - I find 200-mile zones quite enough - but I will not shy away from intervention when intervention is necessary.

To those who twitch at the mention of state enterprises, I have to say that in the crises that have been upon us since early 1974, our two Crown Corporations - the Canadian Saltfish Corporation and the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation - were relatively free of trouble and my files are not bulging with letters from Newfoundland asking for the dismantling of the Saltfish Corporation.

Those who think that federal action to help the industry stay efficient is unprecedented or damaging should look at the competition - the free enterprise competition at that. In Norway, fishermen are organized to sell to buyers, buyers negotiate with fishermen - processors are organized into export groups. Norway regulates and controls marketing and export of all fish products. This has made Norway tougher, not easier, to compete with. Free enterprise has not gone down the drain as a result. On the contrary it has been mobilized and focussed so as to give Norway and other Scandinavian countries a competitive clout out of all proportion to their size.

As for government, we are trying to take our own advice. To coordinate efforts in a sensible way. For instance, I have resisted empire building ashore or afloat - as in the construction of unnecessary surveillance armadas. And we have had excellent cooperation from other departments. Armed forces ships and aircraft, for instance, now have not only one mission, but two - defense is primary, but fisheries patrol is a secondary and official mission. The Fisheries Department fleet in turn has, as its secondary mission, assisting on coast guard work. The coast guard helps

patrol the 200-mile zone. This kind of sensible deployment of effort has already given us a coordinated search and rescue system.

I might add that I have been urged to expand not just the patrol fleet but the fishing fleet, for example with huge new freezer-trawlers. Perhaps this would help the shipbuilders, but I see no need yet of a huge new catching capacity, to re-rape the fishery just now when our existing fleet is only beginning to get out of trouble. New vessels to take all the resources in our zone will come, but at a sensible pace.

I have mentioned some of the possibilities opening up in Newfoundland's fisheries. There are others - indeed, given reasonable management, the possibilities are limitless. Economically, geographically, socially, we are in new territory now. It is possible at last to think about a regional economy based on fishing without thinking of depression, unemployment, boats tied up and young people leaving the land of their heritage to follow other callings in distant places. It is possible to think about those who stay pursuing a career in fisheries without a sense of foreboding for them.

Fishing can become a rewarding way of life for Newfoundlanders. For many, it has not been that way for a long time - so long perhaps that one of our first tasks must be the rebuilding of morale - the creation of a confidence that it can be so



Newfoundland and its fishermen I want to say that this government is committed to building a solid foundation for the fisheries way of life. We are committed to an advance not only toward full nets, but social justice. We are committed also to a measured and intelligent advance. This means we reject all quick fixes - solutions which buy their pace at the price of tomorrow. The industry that we build on the stocks of the 200-mile zone will be built to last.

The new zone is less a pot of gold than a garden needing work and care. We are going to need great self-discipline to avoid repeating errors of the past: overcapacity, over-licensing, overfishing. We can't ask the fish to immediately solve all our social and economic problems. We can, however, be optimistic, especially here, on this fishermen's island, anchored in the middle of some of the world's best fishing grounds. Before, those with their lives invested in the Newfoundland fishery and in other Atlantic fisheries have always had someone to blame for their troubles: the absentee owners, the merchants, the foreign fleets. Now, we have no one to blame but ourselves, if we fail to make the best use of the fish. We can, if we will, bring Newfoundland and Canadian fisheries into their own. We can reap the harvest of the new zone in hard cash, in pride, in a rebuilt fishery that both leads and serves the world.

With an exercise of the patience and common sense that go with the calling, Newfoundland's fishermen can discover, many of them for the first time, that fishing can be a preferred occupation - one of the better ways to earn and to live. Thank you.