

CETA tour with Council of Canadians + CUPE

St. John's stop

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For those interested in rebuilding our collapsed fishery it's important to understand the same European Union representatives who are negotiating the Free Trade Agreement with Canada also represent the interests of the EU fishing members of the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). Consequently those EU fishing nations are fully aware of the overall aims and ambitions of EU in their Free Trade negotiations with Canada and more importantly the EU negotiators are even more aware of aims and ambitions of the EU fishing nations who continue to fish on our Continental Shelf. A very comprehensive questionnaire document concerning every aspect of EU fisheries off Canada's east coast was distributed by the EU negotiators to their fishery compatriots early in Free Trade negotiations. The document covered every aspect of Trade in the fishery and fishery products between the EU and Canada. It includes investment in Canadian fisheries, harvesting and services offered to EU fishing nations. There is no doubt the NAFO fishing interests are high in the negotiating priorities whereas Canadians and the N&L fishing interests in particular have virtually no idea what's being discussed in Brussels that will impact on the rebuilding of our fisheries and the survival of thousands of its participants. This is intolerable in light of the fact the negative impact of shared Canadian fisheries management with foreign dominated NAFO resulted in the 1992 collapse of that once huge and diversified fishery on the Grand Banks.

Furthermore, that shared management is the main reason a scientifically supported recovery program has never been implemented after twenty years of a moratorium against Canadian fishermen. Canada has one vote in NAFO on all matters regarding establishment of Total Allowable Catches (TACs, regulatory measures and enforcement regimes. NAFO was formed in 1977/78, replacing ICNAF (International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic) when Canada extended jurisdiction to only 200 miles leaving the prolific fishing grounds on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap unprotected and exposed to the unrestricted and uncontrolled fisheries under NAFO management. Despite the pleas of knowledgeable fisheries people to include those areas and the original commitment by the Canadian Government to accede to that request, the Trudeau Government reneged and listened to DFO senior bureaucrats state there was not "sufficient geography outside 200 miles to support a prolonged foreign fishery". Thirty three years later the EU fishing nations and others continue to overfish and prevent any hope of that fishery recovering.

When N&L entered Confederation in 1949 we were in a period of transition from the centuries-old and traditional salt fishery to the new and emerging frozen fish industry, this had started in the late 1930s and by 1945 ten new plants in N&L were freezing cod and other groundfish fishery products for the US, European and Asian markets. The supply of fish for those new plants was being harvested by the inshore and a developing offshore fishery using

trawlers and using ice as a fish preservative. Those trawlers replaced the banking schooner fleets that had fished the Grand Banks for centuries. This fishery was conducted on a safe and sustainable basis and came from the very large and diversified fisheries on 775,000 square mile Continental Shelf off our shores. Our N&L fishery was so huge and productive that when we joined Confederation, Canada as a fish-exporting nation, was elevated from 14th to 6th place in the world.

In 1950 one of the world's largest fishing armadas was assembled in Europe and Scandinavia and arrived off our shores. The US Marshall Plan was being directed to rebuild industrial Europe following five years of brutal warfare but the need for protein remained and it was decided that problem would be best solved by mounting a major fishing effort. As a result 1400 large Factory Freezers and trawlers manned by 60,000 fishermen arrived and started fishing in an uncontrolled manner despite the establishment of ICNAF, composed of the member fishing nations, that had been formed in Washington, DC with the express mandate to manage this massive resource on a sustainable and conservative basis. Canada and the US were charter members, as was N&L before Confederation, along with the foreign nations. It failed its mandate because it could not effectively prevent the individual participating nations from under-reporting their catches, discarding immature small fish and overfishing well beyond the catch levels recommended by the Scientific Council of ICNAF. As a result of overfishing the resource began to decline in the mid-sixties and by 1971 the N&L harvesters and processors observed a major change in resource availability and a reduction in the average size. From 1965 to 1971 the catches by local fishermen were cut in half for the same effort and the size of cod being landed was reduced from an average of 4 to 2.2 pounds. Foreigners continued to fish at an ever-increasing pace throughout the early and mid 1970s. The impact of viability of processors and harvesters was such that a delegation representative of every sector in the industry went to Ottawa in Oct/1971 and made a presentation to the Departments of Fisheries, External Affairs, and International Trade and to Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet. They were warned that unless the foreign fishing effort was reduced, the fishery would collapse. The industry presentation as supported by scientific documents provided by Dr. Wilfred Templeman, a noted Federal Fisheries chief scientist in N&L.

As a result of that presentation a commitment was made to Premier J R Smallwood by the DFO Minister that the Canadian Government would extend jurisdiction to the Slopes of the Continental Shelf and thus full provide protection for the fish stocks that were being decimated by foreign fleets. Seven years later the Government of Canada reneged and extended jurisdiction to only two hundred miles thus leaving exposed the most prolific fishing grounds on our Continental Shelf. They were repeatedly warned that 200 miles would not be sufficient in meeting the need for adequate protection.

Following extension of jurisdiction a new Commission called NAFO was formed to replace ICNAF to manage fish stocks outside two hundred miles and also participate in management of over-lapping stocks that migrate over that imaginary 200 mile line on the Grand Banks. This combined management with Canada failed miserably because NAFO repeatedly failed to control the foreign fishing effort. The net result was a collapse of the

fishery in 1992 with a moratorium declared on groundfish against Canadians but with NAFO permitting foreign fishing to continue in an unrestricted and uncontrolled manner. Twenty years have passed and there is absolutely no sign whatever of recovery simply because foreigners continue to catch the depleted groundfish through directed fisheries or elevated bycatches with other species. The information on foreign catches, infractions and punitive measures by Flag States have to be gathered from clandestine sources because Canadian Freedom of Information legislation prohibits its citizens from obtaining such details. DFO uses every possible means to avoid disclosing information of foreign overfishing.

With the collapse of our fisheries in 1992, 80,000 people or 15 percent of our population from fishing communities were forced to move to Mainland Canada for employment. Thirty thousand jobs were lost in the harvesting, processing and goods and service sectors of the industry. On a pro rata basis with Ontario it would have been the equivalent to 2,000,000 people having to move and 780,000 jobs lost in the Ontario manufacturing industry. The response in Ottawa would have been swift and effective in dealing with the basic cause of the problem. Yet no effort whatever has been made by the Canadian Government to deal with the twenty year old disaster. And with existing euphoria related to oil and hydro developments even the Provincial Government is not providing the leadership to bring various sectors of the industry together to force Ottawa to meet its responsibilities to rebuild the fishery. In fact the N&L Government is so preoccupied with oil it has signaled remote Ottawa DFO politicians and bureaucrats that the fishery is not a priority in N&L. The result is even more obvious in the Regional Headquarters of DFO in St. John's. The scientific capability of DFO in N&L since the 1992 collapse has been reduced to a point where its fishery science branch is unable to adequately assess the state of the various stocks because of reduced research capability. An example is the fact the important food source for many fish stocks, capelin, has not been assessed in nine years and the best estimate from the scientists is the present day capelin biomass is at one percent of its historic level. Yet DFO has recently announced a commercial capelin fishery quota for 2011 season as though the resource is in a healthy, well-managed state.

In the meantime, the Free Trade negotiations proceed in Brussels with Canadian fisheries very much part of the agenda and according to reports every effort is being made to conclude an agreement in 2011. Yet the public is totally unaware of how the N&L fishery will be impacted by this proposed agreement. We are aware that the Province of N&L is the only east coast province that will be impacted since only N&L have to contend with the consequences of foreign overfishing and the continued collapsed ground fishery impacts the viability of processors only in N&L. We do know that foreign interests are infiltrating the 200 mile zone. They are already involved in the control and management of a very large portion of the offshore FFT Canadian shrimp quota which DFO recently adjusted in favor of the offshore and against the interests of the inshore sector that provides landings in N&L for shore plant employees to process. Most Factory Freezer Trawlers are foreign-owned and pay a royalty to the Canadian holder of the shrimp quota. The foreign owner harvests the shrimp, processes and markets the larger shrimp to Japan and the UK and the remaining 25/30 percent of industrial (small) shrimp is frozen raw and is landed in Iceland for peeling. How Ottawa, the

Government of N&L, the FFAW and the N&L processors can continue to accept this foreign control over our shrimp fishery and the dangerous precedent it has set has to be seriously questioned.

If a similar intrusive situation existed in Norway, Iceland or Alaska, their governments would pass legislation within twenty four hours that bring it to a screeching halt. Along with other Canadian mismanagement practices this situation should be a matter for a Judicial Inquiry into the N&L fishery.

When one carefully examines the questionnaire on Canadian fisheries distributed to the NAFO fishing nations when the Free Trade negotiations began two years ago its sends a chill up your neck. Every conceivable question is asked in reference to gaining increased access to Canadian fish and control of its industry. There is absolutely no doubt the EU negotiators are aware of every possible avenue that might be explored to gain still further access to our depleted resource. The fact that we are now shipping increased quantities of unprocessed fish to China and the US is a dangerous precedent which is not escaping the attention of those EU negotiators. And even more dangerous is the fact that one processor in N&L has already taken the unbelievable step of selling 2000 tons of turbot, a Common Property Resource, still swimming in the ocean, to a processor in another province for millions of dollars. This is fodder for the EU and who can easily visualize the day when Canadian quotas, in the water, would be sold to them including the obtaining of licenses from our government to catch the quotas. In the meantime 80,000 people are lost to the province along with 30,000 jobs.

If anyone doubts the possibility of such a transaction taking place we refer them to the recent experience we had with the much publicized NAFO Amendments. The last Annual meeting in Spain produced a set of amendments to the regulatory and enforcement regimes that were written by the Russian and Spanish NAFO members and accepted by the then DFO Minister, the NAFO Commissioners and others. When these amendments were carefully reviewed by experts it was realized that in the process the door was being opened for a possible return of NAFO inside 200 miles in addition to the fact that the proposals did nothing to improve the objection procedure and dispute mechanism clauses. When both the House and Senate Committees on Fisheries carefully examined the amendments, both Committees rejected the amendments outright and consequently it went to the House of Commons. The elected members of Parliament held a four hour debate and then voted to reject the amendments with the vote 147 for and 142 against. In spite of the vote the following day the Prime Minister and the Minister of Fisheries ratified the amendments and notified NAFO officials accordingly. This decision came as a shock to all concerned and it indicates the attitude of the Canadian Government regarding matters affecting our industry such as those under discussion at the Free Trade negotiations in Brussels.

Realistically, the NAFO and EU Free Trade representatives are on the same wavelength with full knowledge of what is transpiring in those negotiations as they progress. On the other hand those in the N&L fishery are behind a wall of secrecy with only Federal Government negotiators having full knowledge of process. What should be of great concern to the Government of N&L is the fact DFO is abandoning its fisheries management responsibilities

on every front and there is not even a plan in place by Ottawa to rebuild one of the world's great food sources. Without a rebuilt groundfishery the future of a very large portion of our population is in jeopardy. In Norway, in addition to repeatedly voting not to join the EU because they are dedicated to protecting their fisheries, their Government has implemented a long term program to modernize their fisheries on every front including major steps to improve the quality of life of its fishery participants in the north to ensure Norway's economy remains strong and vibrant when oil revenues are exhausted. N&Lers should take every possible step to make certain we have a Provincial Government in power that will leave no stone unturned to rebuild our fisheries and ensure a productive future for the fishing industry.

It is the ultimate responsibility of the Federal Government of Canada to rebuild and sustainably manage the fisheries on our Continental Shelf on the basis of a well-developed scientific program. DFO Ministers and senior bureaucrats were aware since 1949 of the failure of both ICNAF and NAFO Commissions to control overfishing and other excesses of their foreign fishing members. The Scientific Council year after year reported and forecast the decline in practically every fishery and proposed measures to the Commissions to deal effectively with the decline. Canada as the coastal state and a member of the ICNAF and NAFO Commissions did not respond and demand more effective fisheries management to protect the vital interests of its fishery participants. There is absolutely no reason our fisheries should not have been managed in the same manner as the excellent models of successful fisheries in Norway, Iceland and Alaska of the US. In all three cases the leadership existed that build a strong foundation for cooperation between all sectors and the demand for strong fisheries management.

The Government of the Province must provide that leadership needed in N&L to consolidate unions, processors, municipalities and other local organizations in an all out effort to convince Ottawa that it is federal responsibility to rebuild and sustainably manage one of the great sources of food in the world.