

RESTRICTED

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ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1976

NOTES FOR STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE ROMEO LeBLANC
MINISTER OF STATE FOR FISHERIES AT OPENING OF 1976
ANNUAL MEETING OF ICNAF

It gives me great pleasure to welcome delegates to the 26th Annual Meeting of the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF).

I wish to recall that we had been invited by the Government of Cuba to hold this annual meeting in Havana. I want to thank the Cuban Government for foregoing their plans so that Canada could host the meeting. A good deal of preparatory work must have been done in Cuba and I very much appreciate the Cuban decision which has allowed us to hold the meeting here. I also wish to thank the other member nations for giving up the beaches of Cuba for the sidewalks of Montreal.

Much has happened since the special meeting of the Commission held in Montreal last September. The great concern about the status of the resource off the Canadian coast, which led to the establishment of an effort reduction program and more stringent TAC's for certain stocks, has been reinforced by the pessimistic report developed by the Assessment Sub-Committee at its April meeting in Halifax. We know now that the resource crisis is much worse than we had imagined. Even stronger measures are needed for 1977 if the resource is to survive and to provide an economic base for future fisheries, not only by fishermen of coastal states but by others as well.

On Friday of last week my colleague the Secretary of State for External Affairs and I announced the decision of the Government of Canada to extend Canadian fisheries jurisdiction to 200 miles by January 1, 1977. We believe that such action is necessary to ensure that the disastrous decline of the stocks is halted and that the next decade will see the restoration of a resource that is vital to meeting the protein needs of the world.

The Government of Canada took this step only after careful appraisal of the ICNAF scientists' assessments and a careful review of the management results obtained under present multilateral fisheries arrangements. We are convinced that only the coastal state can effectively provide for proper management of the resource, taking into account the interests of both coastal fishing communities and of fishermen of other nations. Canada is committed to allowing others to fish for stocks which may be surplus to Canadian capacity. I re-affirm that commitment now. For many

stocks there can only be a surplus if the stocks are rebuilt. It is to the process of rebuilding that the Government of Canada is preparing to devote itself now.

Canada has long worked toward multilateral solutions of international fisheries problems. We remain committed to this approach. That commitment has brought us to the present ICNAF meeting. Here, in good faith, we are about to work with other member nations to bring about sound conservation measures for 1977, measures which recognize the needs of our hard-pressed coastal communities and provide for access within Canada's 200 mile-limit by fishermen of other nations so that protein resources do not go unutilized. We believe that Canadian participation in the present meeting will help us all during the transition between the old and new regimes of fisheries management off Canada's coast.

I hope that this Canadian approach will be clearly understood. We are here to consult and cooperate with our ICNAF partners. For 1977, however, Canada will determine within its 200-mile zone the conservation measures to be applied, the vessels which will be allowed to fish, and the allocations they will be allowed to take. Vessels fishing within the zone will be fishing under Canadian permits and will be subject to Canadian enforcement procedures. This does not mean that Canada will ignore the results of this meeting in 1977. On the contrary, as an interim measure for 1977 only, Canada is prepared to give effect to those regulations agreed within ICNAF with Canada's concurrence, by adopting and enforcing such regulations under Canadian law. Canada of course may also adopt additional regulatory measures for 1977 but these too would take into account decisions within ICNAF and would be consistent with agreements reached here with Canadian concurrence.

For stocks of the area outside 200 miles, Canada is committed to multilateral cooperation and is prepared to negotiate the regulations for such

stocks for 1977 on the same basis as at past ICNAF meetings.

I should also like to outline in brief general terms some key elements in Canada's approach to the long-term future of ICNAF:

1. With respect to the future, during 1976, Canada will seek modification of the existing ICNAF arrangements to provide for continued multilateral cooperation regarding the management of stocks beyond 200 miles. In the exercise of its management responsibilities for stocks within 200 miles, Canada will establish consultative procedures aimed at maintaining the present high level of scientific cooperation within ICNAF and providing a forum for discussion of regulations applied by Canada within its zone. We are hopeful that other members share Canada's desire to continue multilateral cooperation and consultation regarding the management of stocks in the Northwest Atlantic and will join with us in the development of suitable new arrangements.
2. In view of the impending jurisdictional changes and the present ICNAF procedure which allows member nations to lodge objections to measures agreed at the present meeting, Canada must serve notice, by June 30, 1976, of its intention to withdraw from ICNAF on December 31, 1976. Canada will not necessarily proceed with withdrawal but must preserve this option to clear the way for new multilateral arrangements which take into account the new jurisdictional realities. Indeed it is Canada's hope that we can make an uninterrupted transition from the old to the new regimes. It goes without saying, however, that if agreement cannot be reached at the present meeting Canada must exercise its option to withdraw.

In proposing new arrangements we are mindful of the value of much that has been developed under the old arrangements. We do not wish to lose what is good. It would be unrealistic for us to hope that this meeting could arrive at final decisions about the future of ICNAF. A special meeting on this question may be necessary later this year. I hope, however, that we can all here and now affirm our mutual commitment to continued consultation and cooperation within what we all know is the developing new order of the sea. Let us set a model for the implementation of that new order as we have in the past, with all our failings, set a model for other international fisheries commissions. We owe this duty to a hungry world. As a first step, we must work at this meeting to assure the protection of the resource and the development of an orderly transitional regime for 1977. That is the job before us. Good luck.

