

TAKING STOCK

Director/Researcher
Producer
Cinematographers

Nigel Markham
Mike Mahoney
Kent Nason, Mike
Mahoney, George Dufaux
John Kramer,
Nigel Markham
Robert Lower
Barbara Doran
Alex Salter, Don Ellis,
Jim Rillie, Jane Porter
The Black Auks
Jane Boyle
Alison Dyer
Marilyn A. Belec

Editors

Narration Writer
Assistant Director
Sound

Music
Unit Administrator
Marketing Coordinator
Executive Producer



© 1994 National Film Board of Canada
P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville
Montreal, Quebec
H3C 3H5



NFB Video Sales:
1-800-267-7710
(voice + TDD)



Design by DARMONKOW ELLIS DESIGN GROUP
Printed in Canada by Dicks and Company Limited



It was a way of life. It was the backbone of a society. And then the cod fishery off the east coast of Newfoundland collapsed. TAKING STOCK traces the history leading up to the crisis and the calling for a moratorium of the Northwest Atlantic Cod Fishery. It presents the key players in this complex and tragic story, focusing on those who are now trying to come to grips with an uncertain future. How did the calamity happen? What signals did we ignore? Did we choose the right model in setting up an industry? Ultimately, TAKING STOCK holds a message for the Canadian as well as the global community: In trying to attain economic success, we must recognize that there are limits to how far we can exploit nature's delicate ecosystems.

Director: Nigel Markham

Producer: Mike Mahoney

Executive Producer: Marilyn A. Belec

1994 MoonSnail Award Winner

A National Film Board of Canada
Atlantic Centre Production

Running time: 47 minutes 13 seconds
Order Number: 113C 9194071

Distributed by the
National Film Board of Canada



Closed Captioned.
A decoder is required.

This video is cleared for public performance providing no entry fee is charged. Unauthorized duplication, cablecast or broadcast is a violation of Canadian copyright laws.



FROM THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

TAKING STOCK

TAKING STOCK



VHS

113C
9194071

USER GUIDE

HISTORY OF THE COD FISHERY

The coming together of the cold Labrador current and the warm Gulf Stream over the shallow banks off Newfoundland and Labrador result in the greatest concentration of harvestable fish in the world. The Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap off the southeast coast of Newfoundland, the Funk Island Bank off the island's northeast coast and the Hamilton Bank and the Belle Isle Bank off Labrador's coast, cover an area of over 100,000 square miles. Fishermen have been fishing cod off the northeast coast of North America since the 1400's.

Northern cod is a migratory fish. The cod move near the shore to feed in the summer and head out to the edges of the continental shelf and the slope of the Banks to spawn in the winter.

In the early days, the fishermen waited for the cod to come to them. They used small, wooden boats that kept them close to the shore. Their fishing gear was simple - baited hooks on lines, hung over the sides of their boats. Later, fishermen would use traps and nets, hauling in large catches.

Fishing methods remained the same for hundreds of years. But in the 1950's, technological advances allowed the industry to become a year-round venture. Sonar, developed for submarine detection in World War II, was applied to fish finding and gave fishermen 'eyes beneath the sea'. Companies built ships with reinforced steel hulls allowing vessels to plough through ice and pursue fish in places previously inaccessible. Freezer systems were developed for vessels, allowing catches to be processed and preserved during extended ocean voyages.

Numerous countries built fleets of factory freezer trawlers in the 1950's and targeted fish stocks around the world. Coastal states, such as Canada, could not control them. Beyond 12 miles of the coastline, the international fleets could do as they liked. Fish stocks began to collapse.

Then in 1977, Canada, and other coastal nations, extended their jurisdiction to 200 miles. While Canada was able to limit foreign fishing, it began to increase its own domestic catches.

Politicians saw an opportunity to bring prosperity to the chronically depressed economy of Atlantic Canada. Markets were buoyant. Fishermen were eager. Bankers and fish merchants were enthusiastic.

The Government believed it could manage a sustainable industry. Its management would be based on scientific fish stock assessments along with quotas and regulations to control the size of the catches. But as the industry grew, the assessment and control systems proved faulty. Canada was soon overfishing its own newly acquired resource.

This overfishing, coinciding with poor environmental conditions, retarded the fish stocks' natural ability to reproduce leading to the economic crisis that has so devastated the rural communities Newfoundland and Labrador.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DFO - The federal government's Department of Fisheries and Oceans manages Canada's fisheries. It studies stocks, sets quotas and enforces regulations.

FPI - Fishery Products International is the largest fish processing company in Canada. The company was formed by the Canadian government by combining a number of smaller bankrupt companies in 1982, and was privatized in 1987.

FFAW - The Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers' Union was formed in 1970. It now represents 23,000 fishermen, trawlermen and plant workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

NIFA - The Newfoundland Inshore Fisheries Association was formed in 1986 to address specific concerns of inshore fishermen such as high quotas and declining stocks.

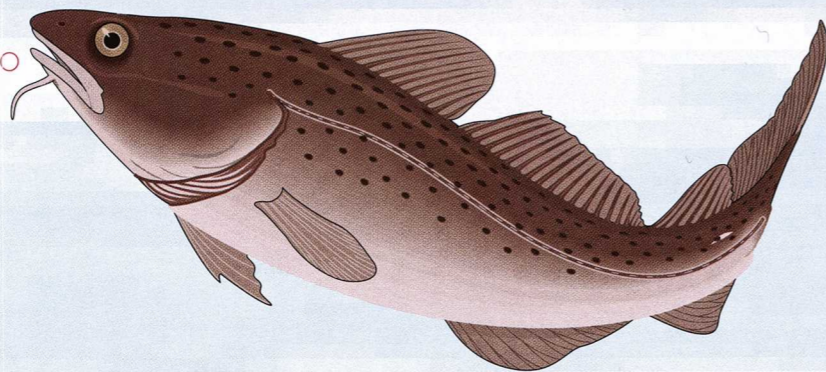
T.A.C. - Based on their scientific estimates, DFO establishes quotas or the Total Allowable Catch annually for each species for the inshore and the offshore fisheries.

Inshore fishery - This summer fishery uses small boats, keeping close to the shore, and uses fixed gear such as traps and gillnets. The boats have small crews and take in relatively small catches.

Offshore fishery - Large companies send crews of 12-16 out to sea on trawlers/draggers that range in size from 150 to 170 feet. The vessels drag large nets behind them and are capable of large daily catches.

Some vessels have factory freezers on board, enabling them to process their catches at sea. Crews can stay out for extended periods at a time and can fish year-round.

Midshore fishery - Technological changes have resulted in an overlapping of the above two fisheries. The midshore fishery uses boats that are 45-65 feet in length, and crews of three to six can travel greater distances than the inshore fishermen. They can use mobile or fixed gear and can stay out for days.



NOW AND TOMORROW

"I can't say its going to come back...It might be at a stage its gone too far for it to come back. I can't say. Scientists can't say. I only hope that we've learned something from all this, so if it does come back we won't do the same thing again."
Pearce Burry

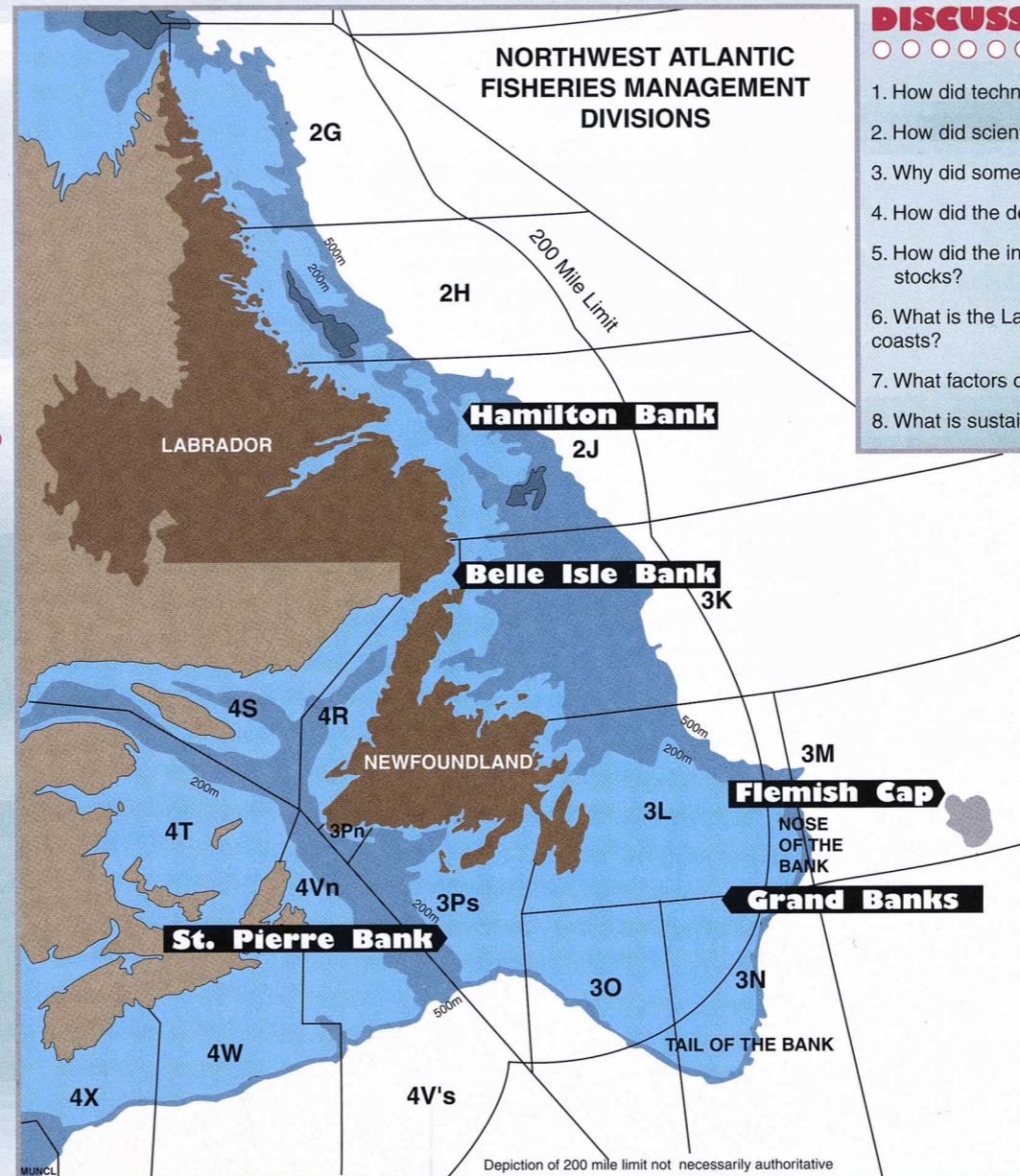
In July 1992, DFO announced a two-year moratorium on fishing northern cod. The closure of the fishery threw 20,000 fishermen and plant workers out of work in Newfoundland and Labrador. The federal government established a compensation program for the unemployed fisheries workers. Two years later, the moratorium was extended indefinitely and compensation was scaled back.

The shut-down of the cod fishery has had devastating effects on the entire fishing industry, including all its support industries. In addition, pressure has been put on other fish stocks such as turbot, capelin and lumpfish as fishermen, who once made a living from cod, fish other species.

It is predicted that should the stocks regenerate, the fishery of the future would, at best, employ only a fraction of the people it did in the past. Both the fishing effort and the processing sector would be greatly reduced.

For those who have made their livelihood from the fishery, the future remains uncertain. The current crisis may have permanently changed the nature of rural life in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Similar crises have become commonplace around the world as increasing pressure is placed on the earth's natural resources.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did technology change the way people fished for cod?
2. How did scientific research into the stocks influence the way the fishery was regulated?
3. Why did some fishermen start worrying about the size of the cod stocks?
4. How did the demands of the market place affect the fishing effort?
5. How did the inshore and offshore fishermen see each others' role in the decline of the cod stocks?
6. What is the Law of the Sea? How did it change the way Canada managed the fisheries off its coasts?
7. What factors can affect the size of cod populations?
8. What is sustainable development? How does it relate to the management of the fishery?

SUGGESTED READING

- No Fish and Our Lives**, Cabot Martin
- Distant Waters**, William Warner
- Net Profits**, Stephen Kimber
- Independent Review Of The State Of The Northern Cod Stock**, Dr. Leslie Harris
- Underwater World Series** (brief illustrated accounts of fisheries resources and marine phenomena), Department of Fisheries and Oceans

RELATED NFB VIDEOS & FILMS

- 10 Days...48 Hours** 85 mins. 10186063
A look at life in a Newfoundland fishing outpost.
- Battle for the Trees** 57 mins. 9193040
The preservation of ancient forests versus large economic needs.
- Changing Tides** 20 mins. 10190163
Fish farming on the B.C. coast and resource management issues.
- As the World Counts** (spring '95 release)
A portrait of New Zealand economist Dr. Marilyn Waring and her ideas on international economics and healthy environments.



"At least 80% of the population depend on the fishery. Without the fishery what else is there here in Newfoundland? Even if you've got a trade, there's no jobs available outside the fishery."

Winnifred Mackay, Fishplant Worker



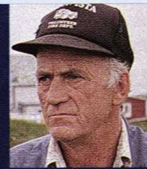
"We did not like to project too far ahead, because the projections are always subject to error the further you get away from your initial year.... People will use the estimates as absolutes and they were never intended to be absolute. They were intended to be a guide as to what might happen should existing conditions prevail."

Claude Bishop, Cod Stock Assessment Officer DFO



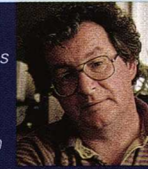
"The way we see it, we're only doing what we're told to do. The Government gives FPI a quota, FPI gives us a boat and we do what we're told to do. If we're catching too much fish the government should've seen that and they should have reduced the quotas ahead of time."

Bill Cox, Trawlerman



"The fishery was never there for mass production and that's what multi-national companies want is mass production of the fishery. If you've got mass production you've got a fast dollar. It's a faster way of destroying the stock. There's no way a fish can produce fast enough to keep against it. Especially when you're dragging up big fish, main spawners. It only makes common sense."

Pearce Burry, Inshore Fisherman



"Back in '82 we made a fundamentally wrong decision when we set up FPI. It was a fundamental choice about the structure of our industry, about the technology that we were going to use, and most of what followed including the demise of the northern cod is a natural consequence of that error."

Cabot Martin, Inshore Fisheries Spokesperson



"The necessity for the offshore industry came initially from the necessity to market fish on a year round basis. If you can't sustain the fish on a year round consistent and reliable basis in the marketplace you would run into problems trying to market it seasonally, and you would have problems keeping the price up so that fishermen and plantworkers can make a decent living."

Vic Young, Fish Company Executive