

No. 31.

By the Honourable Senator Rompkey, P.C.:

July 8, 2010—During the last parliamentary session, the government tabled a proposed treaty that would amend the Convention of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO).

Following depletion of many fish stocks off our Atlantic coast by foreign vessels, Canada in 1977 declared a 200- mile limit. NAFO then came into being to manage various fisheries outside or straddling the outer limit of Canada's zone.

Dominated by the European Union and other countries, NAFO has laid down a dismal record. Lax rules and poor co-operation have prevented recovery of badly depleted species.

Despite that history, the proposed treaty would open the new possibility under certain circumstances of NAFO managing chosen fisheries inside Canada's 200-mile zone. In those fisheries, NAFO would be telling Canadians what to do with regard to research, management, and fishing itself. And the treaty would heighten the chances of foreign vessels themselves fishing inside the zone.

Given NAFO's grim history, former top executives of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans campaigned publicly against the treaty. Premier Danny Williams of Newfoundland and Labrador wrote the Prime Minister and all premiers to urge rejection. The bipartisan Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans urged delay and further study. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans called for rejection, as did the House itself in a recorded vote.

Questions re NAFO posed in the Senate by Senator Rompkey

Written by Administrator
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Despite that democratic opposition, the government announced, immediately after the House vote, that it had ratified the treaty.

Could the government of Canada provide the following information:

1. Why should this country open fisheries within the 200-mile limit, for which coastal communities and our nation fought so hard, to any possibility of foreign management?
2. Will the government confirm that, when the new NAFO treaty enters into force, it will open the possibility that NAFO could under certain circumstances manage particular fisheries right up to the very shores of Canada's Atlantic coast, including the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St. Lawrence?
3. Does the government consider that opening this possibility of foreign management within our zone enhances Canadian sovereignty, and if so, in what way?
4. With a bipartisan Senate committee urging delay and a Commons committee and the House of Commons itself urging rejection, why did the government immediately approve the treaty without further discussion?
5. Will the government confirm that this was a cursory and disrespectful treatment of Parliament; and if it was not, in what way can it be said to have respected the views and the votes of parliamentarians?
6. Does the government intend to continue tabling treaties in Parliament, and if so, does it intend to consider respectfully the views of Parliament, or will it dismiss such views and votes as it sees fit without further discussion?
7. Does the government now reject and would it ignore any further parliamentary discussion on withdrawing from or ameliorating the proposed new treaty, before ratification by other parties brings it into force?
8. If the government does not reject such discussion, will it endorse or at least raise no objection to renewed parliamentary consideration of the treaty?

TAGS: NAFO, Senate, Senator Rompkey, RFMOs, IUU, sustainable, fisheries, fishing

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