

Presentation by Ernie Smith in Bathurst April 3, 2006 on behalf of local 10 MFU to the FRCC

I would like to thank you for coming to Bathurst on this, a fact finding spring trip of your committee.

Having fished lobster for 40 years in the same area, I have saw poor times in the fishery and good times because of many varying factors.

It is nice to be able to address your committee today and I have with me, testimony from many people in the maritime provinces and in particular a local fishery officer Mr Thomas Canty and Gloucester MP Mr Turgeon, delivered to the Marine and Fisheries committee 97 years ago in 1909.

It is very interesting reading of the problems of the day and the frustrations involved into getting them solved. The book belonged to my grandfather, who was working with protection at the time of 1909 and at an early age of 10, in 1967 caught lobsters and sold to the local factory for .03 cents a pound to help his widowed mom and siblings survive, yes the year that our Canada became a country.

Today, however I would like to bring to your attention a modern day problem that has been ongoing for a number of years now, none any worse then however, as it was last fall. The time has come however for us to strongly react. We firmly believe that, unless something is not done real soon, that we will lose the vialibility of the most lucturative fishery we have left.

Inshore fisherman has always been encouraged to implement and respect conservation measures for all species.

Over the years, the fisherman of our area of MFU local 10 have embraced and implemented such measures, and now we are very scared all our efforts and conservation measures we have endorsed might have been in vain. Each year we incredulously watch as the gulf seiner fleet, based in the Acadian peninsula

fish with 1-2 km of our coastline well within the small distance from shore that is the only habitat of the lobster in our area. How can we sit back and allow the destruction of the conservation and enhancement efforts of hundreds of fishing enterprises for the benefit of so few. We cannot tolerate that the fishing effort by the large seiners runs the risk of destroying juvenile herring stocks, and more importantly, permanently alter our lobster fishing grounds.

During the fall of 2004, we watched with interest and concern the activities that took place in PEI relating to this issue. We have felt the full effect of these actions in our own back yard as we watched 100ft mid shore seiner 1 km from our shore, fishing well into our lucrative lobster grounds.

Is it our responsibility to accept this increased fishing effort in our area because they are run out of other areas?

We think not. Moving this problem from Souris PEI to our fishing grounds is not a solution.

This behavior had run them into trouble in other areas and now they are left with our little coastline to operate such unacceptable behavior.

We understand the ramifications of inaction.

We understand that continuing to allow these seiners to fish well within our lobster grounds will destroy our lobster fishery.

We therefore ask that a boundary line of 15-20 fathoms be established from the shoreline similar to the one imposed in PEI in the fall of 2004, be implemented in the Bay of Chaleur before it is too late.

We feel anything else we try to do in the name of enhancement be suspended until the major problems such as this one are addressed.

Lets not be forced to take drastic actions, as was needed in PEI in 2004, and all we are wanting is to be treated like other fisherman in the gulf region for to continue to not only sustain but enhance a future, for the generations after us to be able to harvest and enjoy.

Is this too much to ask? We think not, and plead with you to recommend changes to such ongoing rape, and seeing the only area that has sustained our well being for generations destroyed.

We hope that such a committee as yours, would understand the importance of addressing this serious problem.

We the fisherman of the western New Brunswick section of the Bay of Chaleur want to work with you, with ideas of sustaining a healthy lobster fishery. But, until this serious threat of inialating our future, is seriously dealt with, we feel, we cannot participate in any further ideas of enhancement of lobster as it would not be beneficial .

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to bring this concern to you and we plead for your attention to this urgent matter.