

SPEECH DRAFT FOR CONGRESSMAN LES AUCOIN  
SEAPRO-SEAFREEZE PROCESSING PLANT DEDICATION  
DECEMBER 20, 1978  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GOOD IT MAKES ME FEEL TO BE HERE TODAY. NOT BECAUSE SOMEONE THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO DEDICATE SOMETHING. BUT BECAUSE WE ARE WITNESSING THE REBIRTH OF A GREAT INDUSTRY IN OUR NATION -- THE FISH PROCESSING INDUSTRY.

THIS REBIRTH IS ESPECIALLY REWARDING BECAUSE THE FISHING INDUSTRY WAS ONCE A PROUD AND MIGHT INDUSTRY. ASTORIA, WHICH IS IN MY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT IN OREGON, ONCE HAD 19 VITAL FISHING PROCESSING PLANTS RECEIVING LOADS OF FISH FROM THE RIVER AND THE NEARBY PACIFIC OCEAN. TODAY, ASTORIA ONLY HAS TWO FISH PROCESSING PLANTS.

FOR AWHILE, IT LOOKED AS IF VIRTUALLY EVERY FISH PROCESSOR WOULD DISAPPEAR, AS OUR NATIONAL LEADERS BARTERED AWAY OUR PRECIOUS OFFSHORE FISHERY RESOURCES, AND WE METHODICALLY, IF UNWITTINGLY, ELIMINATED MANY OF OUR INLAND FISHERIES.

THEN WE STARTED GETTING SMART. WE STARTED REMEMBERING OUR FISHERY RESOURCES HAD TREMENDOUS VALUE, VALUE WE WERE ALLOWING TO GO UNTAPPED, OR TO BE TAPPED BY FOREIGN FISHERMEN AND PROCESSORS. SO WE STARTED PUSHING FOR A 200-MILE FISHERY PROTECTION ZONE.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, YOU WONDER WHY THIS DIDN'T DAWN ON US BEFORE BECAUSE A FULL 20 PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S FISHERY RESOURCES ARE CONTAINED IN THE WATERS 200 MILES OFF OUR SHORES. THAT RESOURCE

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WOULD ENABLE US TO HARVEST 20 MILLION METRIC TONS OF FISH -- ONE FIFTH OF THE WORLD'S TOTAL POTENTIAL CATCH -- AND STILL SUSTAIN A VIABLE FISHERY.

DESPITE THAT GOLD MINE OFF OUR SHORE, OUR LANDINGS IN 1977 WERE ESTIMATED AT ONLY 2.4 MILLION METRIC TONS. ANOTHER 2.7 MILLION METRIC TONS WERE TAKEN BY FOREIGN FLEETS. AND THAT MEANS THAT ONLY ONE-FOURTH OF THE TOTAL POTENTIAL OF THE FISHERIES IN THE 200-MILE ZONE OFF OUR SHORE WAS UTILIZED.

WE CAN TAKE LITTLE PRIDE IN THAT WHEN WE REALIZE THAT MUCH OF THE WORLD IS STARVING, AND EVEN THAT PORTION OF THE WORLD WITH FOOD TO EAT IS OFTEN SEVERELY PROTEIN-DEFICIENT. BUT WE DON'T EVEN HAVE TO LOOK ABROAD TO BE ASHAMED. IN OUR OWN NATION, WE GROSSLY OVEREAT, CONSUMING TOO MUCH OF CERTAIN FOODS AND NOT ENOUGH OF OTHERS SUCH AS FISH. OUR ANNUAL PER CAPITAL CONSUMPTION OF FISH IN AMERICA IS 12.8 POUNDS. THE WORLD AVERAGE IS 24 POUNDS. JAPAN'S AVERAGE STANDS AT 79 POUNDS.

BUT WHAT MAKES ME FEEL SO GOOD TODAY IS THAT WE ARE STANDING AMID THE EVIDENCE THAT AMERICANS ARE WISING UP. THE SEAPRO-SEAFREEZE ISN'T THE ONLY EVIDENCE. JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO, I WAS IN NEWPORT, OREGON, TO ANNOUNCE EXPANSION OF A MAJOR PROCESSING PLANT THERE -- AN EXPANSION THAT WILL ADD ONE HUNDRED JOBS AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO THE COMMUNITY'S ECONOMY.

IN THAT CASE, AS IN THIS ONE, THE EXPANSION IS OCCURING PRECISELY BECAUSE WE CREATED THE 200-MILE OFFSHORE ZONE.

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THESE PLANTS NOT ONLY MEAN NEW INVESTMENT IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY, THEY MEAN MORE FISH IN THE MARKETPLACE -- BOTH AT HOME AND OVERSEAS. THAT TRANSLATES INTO MORE CONSUMER CHOICES IN OUR SUPERMARKETS, AND IN LOWERING OUR NATIONAL TRADE IMBALANCE -- AN IMBALANCE THAT HAS APPROACHED \$30 BILLION OVERALL AND MORE THAN \$2.1 BILLION IN SEAFOOD ALONE.

THIS IS THE LEGACY OF THE 200-MILE LIMIT -- AN AWAKENING OF A LUMBERING POTENTIAL FOR PRODUCTIVITY AND VITALITY.

TO BE SURE, THERE'S STILL LETHARGY. THE COBWEBS THAT HAVE CLOUDED OUR THINKING AND OUR PERFORMANCE IN THE PAST ARE NOT ALL SWEEP AWAY.

BY AND LARGE, THE FISHING INDUSTRY REMAINS AN INDUSTRY WITHOUT ADEQUATE CAPITAL TO MODERNIZE, EXPERIMENT AND EXPAND. SOMETIMES, PROCESSORS ARE CAUGHT IN AN ECONOMIC SQUEEZE PLAY AS THE SEASONAL NATURE OF FISHING EXACTS ITS TOLL -- TOO FEW FISH TO PROCESS AT ONE TIME OF YEAR, OR TOO MANY AT ANOTHER.

THEN THERE IS THE TROUBLESOME PROBLEM OF NOT HAVING ENOUGH AMERICANS INTERESTED IN EATING MORE FISH.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIVATE INDUSTRY -- BOTH BY BIG AND SMALL -- CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

WE CAN HELP PROVIDE THE CAPITAL NEEDED TO GET THIS ONCE ROBUST INDUSTRY BACK ON ITS FEET. FOR ONE THING, CONGRESS CAN PASS LEGISLATION I'VE INTRODUCED TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AND TAX ASSISTANCE TO PROCESSORS, TARGETED ESPECIALLY FOR ENTREPRENEURS WILLING TO TAP UNDERUTILIZED SPECIES SUCH AS BOTTOM FISH.

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WE ALSO CAN ASSIST FISHERMEN. THEY HAVE CAPITAL PROBLEMS, TOO, ESPECIALLY BUYING BOATS AND GEAR TO GO AFTER UNDERUTILIZED SPECIES.

I'M ALSO INTERESTED IN MORE FEDERAL DOLLARS TO IMPLEMENT THE 200-MILE LAW...BETTER FISH STOCK ASSESSMENTS ON WHICH TO BASE SOUND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS...MORE ATTENTION TO ENHANCING OUR FISHERIES, AND TO HOW OUR FISHERIES ARE AFFECTED BY DECISIONS ON DAMS AND OTHER WATER PROJECTS.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST MOVE TO ELIMINATE DEFICIT SPENDING IN ORDER TO COMBAT INFLATION. BUT WE SHOULD NEVER APOLOGIZE FOR INVESTING FEDERAL TAX DOLLARS TO ENHANCE, MANAGE AND CAPITALIZE ON A NATURAL RESOURCE THAT WILL PAY DIVIDENDS FOR YEARS TO COME AND HELP REDUCE INFLATION BY INCREASING OUR PRODUCTIVITY.

IN ALL OF THIS, ONE OF THE MORE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS WE CAN MAKE IS TO SHOUT THE VIRTUES OF FISH, AND TO ENCOURAGE LARGE SCALE MARKETING OF FISH AS A PRODUCT. IF WE EXPAND THE MARKETS FOR FISH, WE WILL FETCH THE CAPITAL WE NEED TO BUILD THE PLANTS AND LAUNCH THE BOATS TO CATCH THEM. WE WILL PUT OURSELVES BACK ON COURSE IN USING, MANAGING AND ENHANCING A NATURAL RESOURCE AS BOUNTIFUL AND AS VALUABLE AS OUR TREES, OUR MINERALS AND OUR WATER.

I APPLAUD THE DEVELOPERS OF SEAPRO-SEAFREEZE TODAY BECAUSE THEY ARE PIONEERS. THEY ARE FORGING AHEAD BECAUSE THEY SEE GREAT POTENTIAL. OTHERS MAY NEED A LITTLE MORE URGING. BUT I'M CONFIDENT OUR FISHING INDUSTRY WILL CONTINUE TO REBOUND BECAUSE MANY GOOD PEOPLE ARE WORKING HARD SO THAT IT WILL, AND PERHAPS MOST OF ALL, BECAUSE THERE IS A HUNGRY WORLD CRYING FOR THE FOOD IT CAN PRODUCE.