

OPENING REMARKS BY CONGRESSMAN LES AuCOIN  
BEFORE THE FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE SUBCOMMITTEE,  
HOUSE MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE,  
ON HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 273,  
MARCH 3, 1980

Mr. Chairman, cancellation of the U.S.-Soviet fisheries agreement is an example of an ineffective sanction that is just dripping with symbolism but disastrously off-target.

On the West Coast, the fishery that would be affected is Pacific whiting. By virtue of a joint-venture provision of the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, U.S. fishermen can deliver their catch to foreign processing vessels. Under the fisheries sanctions imposed so far, joint ventures are allowed — but they wouldn't be allowed if the Governing International Fisheries Agreement between the United States and The Soviet Union is cancelled in a macho impulse to punish the Russians.

By creating entirely new markets for fishermen in my region, joint ventures have stimulated fisheries development that could not otherwise have taken place. Let me give some examples.

Last year, under a U.S.-Soviet joint venture based in Seattle, 11 U.S. boats off Oregon and Washington caught whiting and delivered it to Soviet processing vessels.

This year, 16 U.S. boats are expected to participate in the joint venture, and may catch as much as 30,000 metric tons of whiting — fish for which there is no U.S. market. If this resolution passes and the fishing agreement with the Soviets is cancelled, U.S.-Soviet joint ventures are also canceled.

This would be disastrous and more important, it would be stupid. But it won't be disastrous for the Soviets. The Russians can go elsewhere to catch whiting. They can go to South America, for example. Americans can't take up the harvesting slack... We don't have the processing capability. We don't have the markets.

Sure, I'd like to kick the Russians out of our zone; I want to see the day when U.S. fisheries are developed to the point where there isn't a single instance of foreign fishing. That's the goal and promise of the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. But in the meantime we've got to deal with the short-term. Implementation of this resolution will put U.S. fishermen out of business. We'll be left with one more example of a well-intentioned government-action boomerang that does more damage than good.

Whenever you try to use trade as a retaliatory weapon, the question is always: Do the costs justify the returns? We ought to be sure that the price inflicted on the recipient exceeds the cost we impose upon ourselves.

That's why the grain embargo — which I opposed — is of dubious value. The costs outweigh the effect. But Mr. Chairman, even in the case of the grain embargo, there was no cancellation of a treaty — which this resolution proposes.

On top of that, American farmers have been promised to be made whole for lost grain sales. Who's making the same promise for fishermen? Who's offering to reimburse them for the loss of \$15 million in capital investment in fishing boats, or for the potential loss of \$3 to \$6 million in their catch?

I'm in full agreement with those who want to make the Soviets pay a concrete price for their aggression. But this resolution doesn't do the job. It adds up to a mistake. It doesn't matter that the language is "permissive".

Quite simply, cancellation of the fisheries agreement won't help us. It will hurt us. And that's why I oppose it.