

ON the PACKAGE

Fisherman: It was the right thing to do. They had to close it. I knew something like that had to be done to save the fishery. And now coming into this year, well, it's only this Summer now and then the Fall. Then we're back at it again. Hopefully the fish comes back.

Sound: Lighting a cigarette.

Sound: Waves, foghorn

Narrator: Maybe part of the problem was, we could never really see it. Out there, where two huge ocean currents meet and dance together. From the south, the Gulf Stream. Warm. From the north the Labrador Current. Very cold. Above the surface their dance looks like this, like fog. Underwater, the dance is much more rare and beautiful, but only the fish know what it looks like. For centuries, millions upon millions upon millions of them have come to breed, and feed, and dance with it. That's why for 500 years the Newfoundland Cod Fishery was the greatest fishery in the world.

Song: So Catch a' hold this one, catch a' hold that one.
Swing around this one, swing around she.
Dance around this one, dance around that one,
Diddle dum this one, diddle dum dee.

Narrator: The trouble is, you can lose your way in the fog. The landscape you know can slip away. Like the memory of what used to be.

Singer: This is a song that relates to the Newfoundland situation now since the fishing moratorium. You no longer can catch any codfish. And since there were a lot of people employed in the catching of that codfish, and they made their living off it, the federal government came up with a compensation program. That's what they call "the package."

Song: They called a moratorium,
They left us high and dry
They took our small communities
And left us F.P.I.
They give us compensation
They hoped to buy our soul
Their fancy fishery package
Just another kind of dole.

Now which side are are you on ?
Which side are you on ?

Sound burst: Banging on door, shouting

Narrator: Which side, was the outside. A year ago July second. Outside the door.

Sound: News theme

News Reader: Reaction to the announcement of a two year ban on the Northern Cod fishery was swift and angry. Enraged fishermen tried to break down a hotel door where Fisheries Minister John Crosbie was holding a News Conference.

Fishery Minister at news conference: ...This should look after any emergency situation, until we can decide what's necessary in the longer term for the two year period...

Reporter: Mr. Crosbie, did you expect this kind of reaction when you brought this

announcement down?

Sound: fishermen outside door trying to get in.

Newsman: Am I on the air? Yes I believe I am... This is Doug Letto here, we can see some fishermen here trying to get into the news conference room where Mr. Crosbie is holding his news conference. They are being held at bay by some people. We're not sure if they are hotel security people..

Singer: I saw it on television. I'm sure I saw Sam Lee. I remember Sam, at the door.

Newsman: ..There are more fishermen coming, we are assuming they are fishermen, heading down the hall way to the news conference room...

Singer: This is really symbolic of what has happened and continues to happen. Politicians and bureaucrats talking about whether or not those fellows are going to be allowed to catch fish - whether there's any fish out there - blah, blah. They were barred out. They weren't even allowed to be in and listen to, you know, what was going to directly affect them the next morning. It's symbolic.

Sound: Door slam.

Narrator:: But that was all then. Now is a year later. Half way through the two year moratorium. Now is the waiting.

Sound: Clock ticking

Singer: I'm trying to think of the song...
The springtime of the year is coming
and now we must away..... (humming)

Narrator: Tell me who you are and what you do.

Fisherman: Well. My name is Sam Lee and I'm an inshore fisherman from Petty Harbour, a community just outside St. John's on the island of Newfoundland - and my chief species is cod. As a matter of fact, my only species is cod.

Narrator:: How old are you? Tell me about your family.

Fisherman: I'm 43 years old, I'm a single parent of three, three kids. We're living off the grace of the federal government right now with the moratorium package - which should be over this time next year. And I'll then be living off the grace of God and the fishery - with anyluck.

Song: The springtime of the year is coming
Once more we must away
Out on the stormy banks to go
In quest of fish to stay.

Fisherman What is a fisherman? Some people says he's a fool. Everybody that's fishin' says they're fools. And you don't know, every day it's just different. When I get up every morning I don't know what's going to be. I may go out to my trap, it may be full of fish. It may be empty. It may be gone. The ropes could break clear of the graplins and the tides could take it away. A whale could take it away. I mean, there's so many different things, you know. That's what I mean about fishing. It's... It gets in your blood -

Song: From where the wild sea billows foam
There by cold breezes fanned
Out on the stormy billows...no that's not right.
Out on the stormy billows

On the banks of Newfoundland.

Sound burst: Busy wharf, somebody selling codfish "You want a fish? Fresh codfish there if you wants..."

Sound: Rain falling on empty wharf.

Narrator: May 26th. The springtime of the year in Petty Harbour.

Fisherman: Well, last year at this time of the year there was a complete beehive of activity around the Harbour. Fellows were going with cod traps and getting their boats ready and you could always hear the tinker of hammers driving oakum into seams of boats around the harbour. This was the big panic, this was when your adrenalin was flowing, right? Everything was on the move. You'd look out in the fog and everything was just getting nice...

Narrator: Waiting for the fish to come?

Fisherman: Yeah. Getting ready, right? Like Christmas.

Sound burst: Busy wharf.

Fisherman: And now this year? Nothing. Nothing. You don't even see anybody, I mean... Nobody around... Nothing at all.

It's just a lonely feeling, that's what it's like. Just lonely. And now this year I guess I'll... I don't know. Do something. Go up and tinker around the stage where I put my anchors and that... Probably take off boards that don't need taking off, just to put new ones on. Just for something to do. Check for leaks or whatever. Come home. Sit around again.

Singer: There's lots of fish in Bonavist harbour
Lot's of fishin' in around here
Boys and girls are fishing together
Forty-five from Carbonear.

Sound: Scraping boat

Fisherman: 7th of June. Usually these would be in the water by now. But this year the weather has been bad... and well, there's nothing for them to go into the water for. Now the weather's warming up, if we don't get them into the water there won't be nothing left come the fall.

Narrator: A wooden boat like this one will draw apart, eh?

Fisherman: Yeah, cause the seams will open right up, you know. I'll just scrape the old paint off her, give her a new coat of paint, caulk the seams wherever they need to be caulked. This one here you can see some came out of it. I'll put some caulking into that...

Narrator: In terms of fishing technology, is this the culprit? Is this what's knocked the cod stocks down?

Fisherman: No. Not this, how can this knock it down? A little boat like that. The most technology in this one now is a depth sounder and that's it. The rest of it is just basic. Put your cod traps out - if fish comes to it you get it, if they don't, you won't. No more to it than that. We don't chase it down, we don't hunt it. The draggers hunt it down, that technology. The otter trawl boats...

Narrator: Off shore?

Fisherman: Offshore. The inshore, anybody who's into traps they watch the weather, the winds, tides, and just wait. And if it doesn't come, it's nobody's fault. Well right now it's somebody's fault, but nobody likes to listen to us when we tell them. I'm not saying that we're always right, but so

far we're batting 10 out of 10. That's not a bad average.

Sound: Scraping boat

Fisherman: Tried to tell them, tried to tell them something was wrong. It was unbelievable how the fish went in size, right? That was the most noticeable thing of all. Because the otter trawl fleet that moved down into St. John's - they were following the fish - when they moved down to St. John's there was a remarkable difference to what fish was coming into Petty Harbour. But there was no move to change their technology.

We knew then -- that's why we started the Inshore Fishery Association -- that there was something going wrong. And that was going on eight years before they closed the fishery. Trying to tell them that there was something wrong. You know, you got to stop fishing on the spawning stocks, you got to stop this discarding, you got to be more concerned with what's happening out there. Right? We did everything we could - we even took them to court. I mean, we took the Federal Government to Court! We tried everything we could do. And they still wouldn't listen, because we were the so-called ignorant fishermen.

Sound burst: Banging on door, shouting.

Narrator:: June 12th.

Sound: Schoolroom

Fisherman: We have our own co-op, the fishermen of Petty Harbour. We have our own Co-op. A fish plant.

Narrator:: But of course it's not a fish plant this year.

Fisherman: The plant got turned from a fish processing plant into a school house, you might say.

Narrator:: When you're on the package they like you to take training.

Fisherman: So when all this training came out, we said we'd do the training here, we'll change the plant. What's so wrong with me going up there and going to school for a couple of months?

Narrator:: 26 years ago Sam dropped out of school to go fishing.

Fisherman: I mean I'll get grade 12. If nothing else they can say they got their fishermen educated.

Narrator:: Do you ever, when you wake up in the middle of the night, or in your quiet times... Is there ever a little Narrator: in the back of your mind that says "maybe the fishery is not going to open, ever again?"

Fisherman: Yeah. That happened today. In class we were doing a course, and part of the course was giving a speech. And one of the guys was speaking about the fishery and how he got involved with it. Then he finished up saying he don't think he'll ever go back fishing now. And it was only today I realised that I'm looking at the fishery as opening up next year. And I'm going back fishing. That's all there is to it. I'm going to be off for 2 or 3 years, I'm going to get my package, and then I'm going back fishing. I never thought about... what if there's no fish? Then what do I do?

Singer: Oh this is the place where the fishermen gather,
With oilskins and boots and Cape Anns battered down,
All sizes and figures,

With squid lines and jiggers,
They congregate here on the Squid Jigging Ground.

Sound: Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to join with me in welcoming our newest and first graduates. (applause)

Narrator:: June 19th. They walk up the aisle under the balloons and crepe paper streamers. Sam in the middle of the line.

Fisherman: We're all gathered here for our graduation ceremonies. All the students with their caps and gowns on.

Narrator:: You're getting your Grade Twelve, right?

Fisherman: Yes. All the graduates here have achieved their grade twelve.

Narrator:: What are you going to do after this? Given it any thought?

Fisherman: After this? I'm going fishing.

Narrator:: The lyrics of the graduation theme song say "the cares of tomorrow will wait til this day is done." But this afternoon, the cares of tomorrow are too impatient for that. They're fifteen miles up the road in St. John's, at a news conference.

Fishery Minister at news conference:

Today we want to provide you with a scientific update on the northern cod. The latest scientific information certainly underlines the dimensions of the fishery disaster that is underway. Recovery of the stock is obviously now some years away. The ability of federal and provincial governments to assist is limited...

Sound: News theme

Newscast: In the news tonight, its worse than they thought. There's more grim news about cod stocks off the coast of Newfoundland. Almost a year ago the federal government imposed a 2-year ban on cod fishing. More than 20,000 people lost their jobs. Now there's more bad news. The latest scientific study shows the cod stocks are actually shrinking.

Fisheries Minister at news conference:

It's not just a fisheries problem. It's a major social and economic catastrophe... I suppose would be the best way of saying it.

Sound: Telephone ring

Operator: Operator.

Narrator:: Hello operator. I'd like to place a marine call to the fisheries research vessel the Gadus Atlantica.

Operator: Where is this vessel?

Narrator:: I think it's somewhere off Funk Island.

Operator: Gadus Atlantica... Who do you want to speak to?

Narrator:: Sam Lee.

Operator: Sam Lee?

Narrator:: Yes. He's a fisherman...

Narrator:: June 25th. Sam's not home.

Operator: And your number? Phone number?

Narrator:: 722-7111

Narrator:: It turned out that at the graduation, someone offered Sam the chance to go to sea for ten days, with government fishery scientists on an offshore research trip. He sailed a few hours later. He'll be out there for another week. Which means he'll miss the performance tonight.

Sound: Car horn, singing

Singer in car: We're going out to Petty Harbour. To perform at this... conference. To sing at it.

Operator: Hello, operator. Okay, they're gone to get Sam there now. Just.. a couple of minutes.

So you'll have to hold, sir.

Narrator:: Okay.

Singer in car: Everything feels so strange these days to me. It's not like you're going in to Petty Harbour and the boys are going to be getting up in the morning and going out to the fishery or anything. It feels like everything's dying. Dying out.

Operator: Okay operator in Cape Sambro, go ahead your call.

Narrator:: Hello.

Fisherman: Hello.

Narrator:: Hi Sam, it's Chris. Over.

Fisherman: How you doing Chris? Over.

Narrator:: Okay. Listen, the last time I saw you was at graduation. How did you wind up out there?

Fisherman: There was a position open for an observer to go out to have a look at the type of experiments they carry out. Over.

Narrator:: What's the purpose of the trip, Sam? Over.

Fisherman: The vessel's out now looking for cod. Seeing if they can find any cod around on the Grand Banks. And there's very little cod, as a matter of fact hardly any at all, and what we do find is very small. We have probably landed a total of 20 small cod in about 5 tows. Over.

Narrator:: Is that... I mean you say 20. I would have thought it would have been measured more in terms of hundreds of pounds. Is that the way it would normally be? Over.

Fisherman: Normally it would be measured in thousands of pounds, but I mean like 20. Two, zero. Twenty. And very small at that. Over.

Singer in car: Out in Petty Harbour, see, they had these particular type of boats. The Petty Harbour Bait Skiff. And, well... it's a song that was made up about a tragic event that took place.

Narrator:: So from what you're seeing, is it making you any more optimistic about when the fishery might reopen? Over.

Fisherman: It's not making me very optimistic. As a matter of fact I don't think it's going to open for another twenty years. Well, you have to be here to believe it. I never believed it was this bad, Chris. This is really gone. Over.

Singer in car: There was a heavy squall of wind and the boat tipped over and only one fellow was saved. A very tragic song.

(radio sounds)

Fisherman: Ah, I don't know if I needs this at all Chris. Before, I had a little bit of hope for the future. Now I don't have much at all. It's just gone.

Singer in car: But there's, ah, there's a different feeling singing a tragic song when everything else is okay. It's just sort of like it's a bit of history that you, you're sort of reminding people of, or reminding yourself of. But it becomes really hard for me to sing those songs in the context of what's going on now. I find my throat just closes up. You know. I get really emotional. And you can't be emotional when you're singing, you know. Because it closes off your throat! (laughs softly) And then you can't sing.

(sound of applause at concert)

Singer: (In concert)
Good people all, both great and small
I hope you will attend.
And listen to these verses few.
That I have lately penned.
And I'll relate, the hardships great.
That fishermen must stand.
While fighting for a livelihood
On the Banks of Newfoundland.

(sound of footsteps, opening and closing door)

Fisherman: Good morning Christopher.

Narrator:: How are you?

Fisherman: All right.

Narrator:: July second. Sam's back home.

Fisherman: There ain't no fishery coming back in a hurry. I'll tell you that.

Narrator:: On the kitchen table, cigarettes, a lighter, a 649 (lottery) ticket.

Fisherman: No. There ain't a fish out there Chris. If there was, I'd be the first one to tell you that yes there is hope, because I want there to be hope. But there is no hope. (in louder Narrator:) All one can do now is ponder what one's going to do with the rest of one's life!

Narrator:: When Sam smokes, you notice his hands. Flesh thick around his fingers like winter gloves. The kind of hands that could haul a net for hours, and not cramp with the cold.

(Lighter clicks open)

Fisherman's hands.

(Lights cigarette, lighter snaps shut)

Fisherman: I went out expecting to see the net coming up behind the boat with a few fish in

it. Right? And I was under the impression that they had windows in the net to let it escape because it was only scientific, they only wanted samples I figured. So, when the net come back and there was this little lump in the cod end you know, it was kind of disheartening to see the net not floating up. But you know I just passed it off with that. And I was out there for about a week under that assumption.

Until one day I was looking at the net coming back and I was looking for the windows to see where the fish got out, what they were talking about windows, and that. And I couldn't see any. And so I went down and was talking to the scientist on board, George Rose, and asked him about the windows. And he said there was no windows in it.

George Rose: Yes. I think he was quite dumbfounded when I, when he was told that in fact, no, there were no windows in the net, that was it. He was shocked. But you've got to see it. You've got to take people out there and say 'this is where we used to find hundreds of thousands of tons of fish.' And show them on the echo sounder that it's absolutely bare water. There's nothing there. To good fishermen like Sam, this is a gut-wrenching experience.

Fisherman: What happened to it? Where did it go? I don't know. I was out there wondering if I'd come back in now and put everything in the paper and sell the whole works if I can, but...

Narrator:: What, your fishing gear?

Fisherman: Yeh. What good is it? I don't expect to be using it in my lifetime.

(Sound of clock ticking)

George Rose: If I had to paint a scenario of what's happened -- we started off with massive overfishing in the northern part, when the stock was truly abundant. And we have to go back to the 60's to see that. Massive, massive overfishing. But the environmental conditions overall, even though we have had some little blips of good conditions, have been deteriorating for 30 years. And it was starting to catch up with us. It was not realized by people who were doing the assessments, that this was going on. So we kept on overfishing. We kept on fishing too much, and we really did a job on a stock that, because of environmental reasons, was having a difficult time.

And we kicked them down so bad, that there are no quantities of them left. Now whether there are enough of them left to re-establish, to re-spawn, in those areas, we just don't know.

Narrator:: A lot of inshore fishermen that I talk to say, well we told you so. We've been telling you this for years and you wouldn't listen. And they point the fingers at politicians and scientists like you.

George Rose: Yeah. Oh I know. Yeh, and ah, you know, there's a point to be made there all right. Ah, ah... many mistakes were made in the scientific process but you know I would argue strongly that that the problem was not that there was science involved, and that the scientists were wrong. It was that there was not enough good science applied to the problems that the fishermen were rightly pointing out with the fishery.

Singer: The clouds lay in the atmosphere
For our destruction met.
Boreaus blew a heavy squall
Our boat was overset.

Fisherman: It's not just work. It's not just money. It's not just, you know, having like... Hell, I don't doubt I'd be a lot better off if I didn't go into the fishery. You know what I mean? But, like.. when I'm fishing, my heart and soul is into what I'm doing. But for me to go anywhere else to get a job? No. God, as soon as the sun is shining you'd want to be out, and you'd be, your mind

would be on the water, and you know, on what you would be doing. Not what you're doing, but what you would be doing. Right? I'd be only occupying a space. You know? I'll do a day's work. But it'd be only that, a day's work. It won't mean nothing.

Singer: Your heart would break
All for their sake.
If you were standing by.
To see them drowning, one by one.
And no relief be nigh
Struggling with the boisterous waves
All in their youth and bloom
At length they sank
To rise no more
All on the eighth of June.

Fisherman: And now I'm... my mind is rattled like, I don't know what to be thinking. I... I don't want to give up on it. Not yet. It's a (swallows hard) It's a big thing, you know. Ah... Just to give up on it, when there is hope. There is always hope. Not much of it. But... my mind frame now is telling me the fish is not caught. It's not gone. It's moved somewhere, right? And in time it will come back to us. You know, it's just... You can't even imagine never having a cod again.

Singer: (Sings) So, catch a hold this one
Catch a hold that one...

(Sound: Banging on news conference door, shouting)

Singer: (Sings) Swing around this one
Swing around she...

(Sound: busy dock, Narrator:: "You want a codfish? Fresh codfish there if you wants...")

Singer: (Sings) Dance around this one
Dance around that one
Diddle dum this one
Diddle dum dee.