

Act 1. Scene 1.

(Place: The fish plant. The workers are cutting up the fish. It is towards the end of the day and work has slowed down a little bit. The workers are beginning to relax and talk among themselves.)

Worker 1: Was the mail in today?

Worker 2: There wasn't any here at lunch time and I've been expectin' a parcel for the last four weeks. Sears is some slow.

Worker 3: (Rubbing her legs) God, I can't wait for this day to be over. I've been on my feet since six o'clock and me legs and feet is some sore.

Worker 4: Yes, boy, this day is really dragging on. How much fish have we got left anyway?

Worker 2: We've only got 800 lbs. left now. It won't take very long for us to do that.

Worker 3: Thank God, it will soon be over. I really can't stand very much more of this today.

Worker 1: Boys, you know we shouldn't complain. It could be worse. We could be like Tom, Mary and Joe who got laid off a couple of days ago. And that is real early. I wonder who will be next to go.

Worker 4: I certainly hope I gets another couple weeks work cause I needs another two stamps and if they lays me off I don't know what I will do.

Worker 2: Stop being so depressing. We'll do what we always does, so, let's talk about somethin' else. (Pause, there is quiet for a moment, then) Is anybody goin' to the dance tonight?

Worker 1: I don't know. If it is anything like the last one, I won't be staying very long.

Worker 3: I must be gettin' close to quitting time because here comes the boss. I'd know (his or her) footsteps anywhere.

Worker 2: Go on, you don't know what you're talkin' about.

(Enter the fish plant manager. He/she is not looking very happy.)

Worker 4: I wonder what's wrong. I'll bet it is another lay off.

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Manager: Boys, I don't know how much longer I'm goin' to be able to keep you working. There is a real shortage of fish.

Worker 2: (Thoughtfully) You know what doesn't make sense to me?

Manager: What?

Worker 2: Here's us with a shortage of fish and the government is giving it away to the French.

Manager: I know, I don't understand it neither. (Looks at watch and leaves to go and ring the quitting bell.)

Worker 1: It's them Frenchies, they have always wanted everything we've got.

Worker 3: That's true, I wonder if Peckford will do anything about it. (There is general laughter.)

Worker 2: Seriously though, last year, he visited all the north coast and places like Nain, Makkovik and Hopedale have got what they wanted. Perhaps, this year he'll do the same for the south coast, startin' with Cartwright.

Worker 4: Look, the government is not goin' to do anything. You know that as well as I do. They never have and they never will.

(At that point the quitting bell rings, the workers put on their coats and leave the fish plant.)

Act 1. Scene 2.

#### Characters

Newscaster  
 French fisherman  
 Newfoundland fisherman  
 Mr. Codfish  
 Fish plant manager  
 Fish plant manager's spouse

(Setting: the fish plant managers living room. Man walks into the living room, burps loudly, sighs, and rubs his stomach.)

Man: Boy, that was some good supper. Fish and brewis is me favourite meal.

Woman: (Calls from off stage). Better enjoy it now while we still got it. (Woman comes in with a cup of tea for her husband and herself.) Here's yer tea.

Man: (Getting up from couch) Put it on the coffee table, I'm gonna turn on the T.V. and watch a bit of news.

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Music for the news starts. Man and woman settle down in their seats.

News caster: Good evening, welcome to tonight's edition of Now and Then. Highlights are: A cure for AIDS has been discovered, the Avalon Mall has declared bankruptcy, and Wayne Gretzky retires. But first, our special edition on the Northern Cod Dispute. Later in the show we will be interviewing an French and local fisherman about their feelings towards this dispute, but first a little background. In the late 1800's, the Treaty of Utrecht allowed St. Pierre and Miquelon the right to use the western and northern coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador as a fishing base. This coastline became known as the French shore. In 1927, France gave up the rights to the French shore, however, they still maintained their historical fishing privileges in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the south coast of Newfoundland. In the 1960's offshore oil became important to Canada and at the same time Canada was successful in extending her fishing boundary to 200 miles. This put pressure on the French to withdraw from their traditional historical fishing areas. In response to this action and foreseeing the value of the offshore petroleum exploration the French made St. Pierre and Miquelon a department of France and claimed a 200 mile limit off all its territory. The French 200 mile limit overlaps Canada's own claim considerably. Canada argues that France only has a right to a 12 mile limit around the department of St. Pierre and Miquelon. To date, Canada and France have not been able to settle the dispute in a friendly manner. However, in an effort to get France to agree to a settlement, Canada suggested giving some of its non-surplus northern cod to France. Newfoundland does not agree with this gesture. Premier Brian Peckford says that the failure of the inshore fisheries is due to over fishing by foreign trawlers of our off-shore stocks and will create many severe problems. We may even lose our inshore fishery. (News caster turns slightly and faces the two people who are in the studio with him.) With me in the studio today is Pierre Lavalle from St. Pierre and George Hopkins from Cartwright.

News caster: George, how do you feel about the cod dispute?

George: Well, boy, (Speaks to audience) us Labradorians and Newfoundlanders have been shuffled around long enough by them foreigners, specially de French. Look at how Britain and France fought over Labrador, and no one asked us who we'd like to go with. It's just startin' all over again, 'cept dis time it's de fish.

Pierre: (Smirking) What do you want us to do, ask the fish?

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George: Sure, da fish already knows where they wants to go. Dey swims down from the ocean to our Labrador shores. And because they're on our shores, they're ours. I don't care what you says, they're our fish.

Newscaster: (Intervenes) How do you feel about this, Pierre?

Pierre: We have just as much right to the fish as anyone else. Who says Canada can have them all? I think...

George: (Interrupts) They are ours because they come to our shores.

Pierre: Next you'll be telling me the fish speak English.

George: Yes, they do. Not only that, they eats our blackberries.

Pierre: (Throws his hands into the air) Here's me, no job, no money, because we don't have fish and he's talking about blackberries.

George: But it is true! Have you never heard the old ones talk about blackberry codfish goin' up in the hills on foggy nights to eat the blackberries. And its true because I even seen it myself.

Pierre: Non, Non (Shakes his head and mutters). Stupide.

Newscaster: (Turns to George) What you're really talking about, George, is tradition and culture.

George: I don't know nothin about tradition and culture but I do know about them blackberry codfish.

Newscaster: (turning to Pierre) Do you have any traditional or cultural reasons for having the 200 mile limit?

Pierre: Yes, we need the fish for our religion.

George: For your religion, what's fish got to do with religion?

Pierre: I don't know. All I know is that we have fried fish every Wednesday and Friday.

George: At least I knew why the codfish came to the hills, they comes to eat our blackberries.

Newscaster: (Smiling turns to the cameras) Tonight, we have a special treat for you, the audience, and our two guests. With us, we have the vice president of the Neptune Fish Co., Our guest has a special personal interest in this particular dispute.

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George: (Turning to Pierre with a frown on his face). I've never heard of Neptune Fish. You?

(Enter Mr. Codfish. He is smartly dressed. George and Pierre have comical expressions on their faces).

News caster: Welcome, Mr. Codfish. It is a rare pleasure to have such an unusual guest with us today. We thank you for coming at such short notice.

Mr. Codfish: (He is not pleased). This had better be important. You have interrupted my vacation. I was relaxing in the Gulf Stream getting my energy back so I can start work.

News caster: We want to know exactly how you feel about the cod dispute.

Mr. Codfish: We have the right to swim where we want to. After all, the ocean is our home. Besides, (he puts his hands into his pocket and pulls out his wallet) all my girlfriends (flicks a load of pictures out of his wallet) are being sucked up by the French trawlers.

Pierre: Not anymore, we had to sell some of our trawlers because we are not allowed to fish.

Mr. Codfish: Surely it is our choice whether you get the fish or not.

George: See, even Mr. Codfish agrees that the fish are ours.

Mr. Codfish: No, we just want neutrality. In other words leave us alone.

George & Pierre: (Together) What about our jobs, our boats, our nets...

Mr. Codfish: (Going a little beserk and looking around) Nets, nets!! Where, Where?

News caster: (Intervenes) It's ok, Mr. Codfish, there are no nets here. (Mr. Codfish checks once more and relaxes)  
(News caster turns to Pierre and George). Continue.

George and Pierre: Most importantly, what about our families.

Mr. Codfish: You talk about your families. (He goes over, opens his brief case and takes out two pieces of salt fish and turns to the audience) This was my wife.

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Pierre: This is crazy. I am talking to a codfish.

George: I agree.

Mr. Codfish: You talk about your families. What about mine? Think about that.

Pierre: That is your job. You should not get caught. (Codfish shakes his fist.)

Mr. Codfish: I've had enough. (Picks up his brief case, wife, and starts to leave. At the door he turns). I knew I should never have agreed to this interview. You humans are impossible to deal with. (He leaves).

George: Well, what can you expect from a cod fish? All I know is that I don't get paid much no more cause I haven't caught much fish and that's all the fault of you French. If you hadn't brought this up in the first place we'd all still be happy and we would not have been sitting here talking to a codfish. Instead, we'd be sittin home eating them with brewis.

Pierre: (Shakes his fist) At least you still have your boats. We don't have many of them any more.

George: That's your fault for selling your boats. France got lots of money anyway. Why aren't they helpin' you instead of you making us suffer?

Pierre: We didn't offer to take your fish, your country suggested it. Perhaps you should speak to your Prime Minister and don't blame us.

George: (Shaking his fist and speaking sarcastically). No, it isn't your fault for not agreeing to Canada's boundary claim. You, just had to be difficult didn't you. We have a hard enough time as it is.

Newscaster: (Intervenes as things are getting a little rough and they are out of time). Gentlemen, gentlemen, please, I am sorry to interrupt but we are out of time.

(Scene shifts to the fish plant manager's living room.)

Man: (Turns off the T.V., turns the light on).

Wife: Well, (she turns to her husband) I told ya. I told ya. Soon there will be no more fish and brewis.

Man: Well, something's got to be done.

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Act 1. Scene 3.

Characters. Fishplant worker with radio.  
Worker walks across the stage carrying a radio. Music is playing. Suddenly there is an interruption.

News caster: We interrupt this program to bring you the following news bulletin. Premier Peckford will be arriving in Cartwright on Wednesday, September 30, 1987. He will also be visiting other southern coastal Labrador communities. During his visit, Premier Peckford will be in conference with community officials to discuss their specific problems. There will also be a public meeting, at the community hall, so the locals may present the Premier with their individual concerns. Now, we will return to our previously scheduled program which is already in progress. (As person leaves the stage, music starts.

Act 1. Scene 4.

Characters: Premier Peckford  
Chairman  
Mr. Codfish  
Fishplant manager  
4 locals

Setting: The community hall. People are coming in for the meeting. There is general gossip as people settle down to wait for the beginning of the meeting.

Chairperson: Ok. This meeting is now called to order. To begin with I'd like to thank the Right Honourable Brian Peckford, Premier of this province for taking time out of his busy schedule to come here and talk to us about our concerns.

(There are a few heckles from the back, but we cannot determine what exactly was said.)

Chairperson: (Ignoring the heckles). Ladies and Gentlemen, let us give a big welcome to the Premier of our province, Brian Peckford.

Premier Peckford: (Stands) Thank you, Mr. Chairman (or Madam Chairperson) ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to visit your town of Cartwright. I have seen and heard many things today. This public meeting was called to give you the opportunity to present your concerns to me. Are there many formal presentations of these concerns?

Chairperson: I believe our fish plant manager has a little presentation to make. (Insert fish plant manager's speech

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Manager: Mr. Premier, on behalf of the fish plant workers I would like to express our feelings about the Northern Cod dispute. The fish plant in Cartwright has been open for many years and is a vital part of our community employing in some capacity the majority of this community. We have seen good, prosperous times and experienced some very poor, hard times. This year is one of those bad times. It is hard enough to manage a hard winter on seasonal employment. This is made much worse when the fish are scarce. Now, the Canadian government has decided to give away part of our fish stocks. If this happens, the fish plant in Cartwright will be forced to close. This will have a detrimental effect on the community. Many will have to go unemployment and social assistance. This will probably be their future. Mr. Peckford, this type of situation is hard enough on the adults in this community who have already seen many hardships, but what about our young people? What type of life will they have if they choose to stay in Cartwright? My question today is How will you, as Premier of our province, prevent this situation from occurring?

Premier Peckford: (Nods in agreement with the concern about the cod dispute). I understand your concern about the cod dispute. In fact, rest assured that you are not the only community who are facing this difficulty. Let me explain what we, as your government have done so far in trying to prevent the federal government from being successful in this action. Thus far, Newfoundland has pulled out of the French was to sell off several trawlers in their fishing fleet. (He pauses and takes sip of water.) The fisheries has always been the mainstay of this province. It is our most important resource. The federal government has always ignored Newfoundland and its problems.

Person 1: (Interrupts) So, do something about it.

Person 2: Yes, never mind the talk, what about our jobs and the fish?

Person 3: Yes, what is going to happen to us?

Person 4: If you got along better with important people like Crosbie we wouldn't be in this state.

Person 2: (Jumps up). Yes, you and Crosbie is always at each others throats.

Chairman: (Interrupts). Please, let the Premier continue. (There are a few mutterings from the audience as they settle down again.)

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Peckford: (With a lot of hand gestures.) I understand your problem but you have to understand mine. I have a whole province to take care of and you have to understand my position. All I ever hear you people say is (At this point he makes a lot of hand gestures) "I want, I want, I want". Well, I am trying my best. I am a Newfoundlander. My concerns are your concerns and visa versa. (He slaps his hand to his fist.) Well, the buck stops here. You (he points to the people) have to trust and put your faith and your future in my (points to himself) hands.

Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Premier. (He turns to the audience). Now the floor is open for questions.

Person 2: You're not concerned about us, you don't care about the normal people.

Person 4: Ya, all you minds is your comfortable job, your power and the money you makes.

Person 1: We got to work hard for what we gets and its barely enough to get by on.

Person 3: All I got is unemployment and welfare when me stamps runs out and that's not enough to feed me wife and kids.

Peckford: You people think I don't understand. Well, I do. (Mr. Codfish slips into the meeting). I've done things in the past for this province and I will continue to fight for the people of this province.

Person 3: Yea, that's just talk, we want some action.

Peckford: (Ignoring the interruption, continues. He raises his voice slightly). We have to unite as one. This is not just your communities fight, it is our provinces fight against not only the French but also our own Canadian government. We are making progress because the federal government, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, are beginning to listen to us.

Person 1: Look, how about we give the French 90 miles and keep 10 for ourselves. That way we'll all be satisfied.

Peckford: Look, I'm willing to help you if you're sensible.

Person 2: Look, sir, all we wants is to keep on working. We gotta to keep hold of our pride somehow.

Peckford: You will keep working. That is my promise to you.

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Person 3: We know what your promises are like. You promised thhis town water and sewer and some of us who live on the point still don't have it. Does this mean that the point in not part of the town? (This last part is said sarcastically and there are a few cheers from the audience over this.)

Peckford: Look, I've asked you what you want me to do and all you've been giving me is complaints. Complaints, complaints, that's all I hear.

Person 1: (Pointing angrily at Peckford). That's your job. You gotta listen to our complaints and then do something about them. We want to know what's going to happen to our fish and that's the bottom line.

Chairperson: (Pointing to his watch, leans over to tell the Premier that he is now behind schedule and is due in Mary's Harbour in half an hours time. He turns to the audience.) He says I'm sorry, but the Premier's time with us is up...(turns to Premier) we...

Person 4: Look, look, there's that codfish that was on T.V. and he's leavin'. Come on, boys, let's get him. He might be our last meal of fish and brewis. (The locals get up from their seats and rush out.)

THE END