

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS FOR GEORGES  
BANK RALLY, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1979

Despite overwhelming evidence that oil and gas exploration on Georges Bank could cause irreparable harm to the world's most productive fishery, the Department of Interior intends to go forward with their first lease sale on December 18, 1979.

I believe that the demands made by many environmentalists, fishermen, scientists, and government officials with respect to Georges Bank are both fair and responsible. I am demanding that stringent environmental safeguards be implemented to protect the marine resources of Georges Bank, including requirements for the safe disposal of toxic drill muds and cuttings, requirements for the reinjection of toxic formation waters, and the establishment of a task force with tough monitoring and enforcement powers over all aspects of exploration and development.

The Department of Interior has failed to respond to those demands. Furthermore, the Department of the Interior has taken no action to review plans for oil and gas activity on Georges Bank in light of the tragic oil spill at Campeche Bay, which devastated the marine life and the tourist and fishing industries of our southern coast.

In hearings before the Senate Energy Committee this week, dozens of witnesses testified that we do not have the capacity to deal with an oil spill on Georges Bank, and that -- with the lease sale just 10 days away -- there are no plans to aggressively develop that capacity.

I am left with only one conclusion: This Administration intends to go forward with energy development on Georges Bank at any price.

In this case, the price is the infinitely renewable resources of the Georges Bank fishing grounds versus the finite and undetermined amount of energy which those grounds may contain.

If we permit the recovery of that finite amount at the present time, we could well be leaving future generations the dreadful legacy of both an empty energy reservoir and a barren fishery.

Clearly it will be several years before any amount of oil or gas recovered from Georges Bank will be available for consumption. Georges Bank offers no immediate solution to our energy needs and we can therefore afford to delay recovery until adequate safeguards are in place.

To force action on Georges Bank now is a symbolic gesture on the part of this Administration to show our effort to reduce dependence on foreign oil. Engaging in this sort of symbolic exercise is dangerous, and the consequences will be dire.

I pledge to every person here today my total commitment to continue the fight to see that our demands are met, and until those demands are met to prevent oil and gas exploration and development on Georges Bank.

Senator Paul E. Tsongas