

**Interviewee Name:** Senator Angus King

**Project/Collection Title:** Voices of the Maine Fishermen's Forum 2018

**Interviewer(s) Name(s) and affiliations:**

Galen Koch (The First Coast) and Teagan White (College of the Atlantic Intern)

**Interview Location:** Maine Fishermen's Forum, Rockland, Maine

**Date of Interview:** March 2, 2018

**Interview Description:**

**Angus King**

Brunswick, ME

United States Senator

Interviewed by Galen Koch with Teagan White

Angus King, a United States senator from Brunswick, ME, speaks about the community of Maine and the cross-section of challenges and interests that are represented by people who attend the Maine Fishermen's Forum. He focuses on the upcoming changes that the Maine community will need to face such as the recent Canadian trade deal with Europe, the Gray Zone, and climate change. Through a story about the implications of refrigeration in the 1920s, he highlights the importance Maine people remaining "resilient and creative."

**Collection Description:**

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**Transcription by:** Galen Koch, The First Coast

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GK: Galen Koch

K: Teagan White (student intern)

AK: Senator Angus King (Interviewee)

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(discussing maps)

GK: So I'll have you state your name and where you're coming from today.

AK: Angus King, started the day in Brunswick and ending the day tonight in Fort Kent, Maine.

GK: Long trip.

AK: Yes Ma'am.

GK: What's happening in Fort Kent?

AK: Dog sled races! The annual CAN-AM, tomorrow, Saturday in Fort Kent. It's a big deal there will be probably several thousand people and there are all kinds of events going on and it's a great annual trip up north in late February, early March.

GK: Wow and can you tell me where you are today, right now?

AK: Today we are all the Samoset in Rockport - aren't we in Rockport, Maine? Just north of Rockland at the Fishermen's Forum which is an annual event going back 15 or 20 years founded by Robin Alden... it's probably even more than that now! Um and it's a fantastic gathering of essentially the entire fishing industry in Maine and many from New England.

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Including many, many fisherpeople, men and women, and also vendors. Boats, I just was at a booth that they make the sticky stuff that keeps your from falling down on a boat and banks and business people and it's just a fabulous day.

GK: And what's your history with the Fishermen's Forum?

AK: I think I've come not every year but I've been coming at least 20 years. I remember first coming in the nineties, when I was governor of Maine and meeting with the fishermen then. At that time there was more offshore finfish fishing, now 80% of the value of the ocean product in Maine is lobsters so that's the real focus of a lot of today. First thing I did this morning  
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was go to the meeting of the Maine Lobstermen's Association, congratulate Dave Cousins, the President who's retiring at 27 years. I gave him a flag that's flown over the U.S. Capital and put a little piece in the Congressional record about all the leadership he's provided over the years.

GK: I saw that and it was really sweet and one of the things - I think it was you that said it about how people in Maine - how everybody knows everybody.

AK: Right Maine's a big small town with very small streets.

GK: I wonder if, coming here, you can talk about how that plays out here at the Forum and what the community is like.

AK: Well all day today I've been running into people that I knew. Just on the way out for example I met a lady named Fitzgerald whose brother is an old friend of mine. I hadn't met her before but she had sent me a book recently that she wrote  
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I've known her brother for many years. Ran into Robin Alden who used to work with me as Commissioner of Marine Resources when I was in Augusta. Pat Kelleher, the Commissioner, Dave Cousins. I just ran into a guy named Scott Planting who I knew in the 90s when he was a poster in Farmington and now he's involved with the Maine Seacoast Mission, I mean that's who Maine is. A community. And I think it's something that's special that we who are here don't fully appreciate how special this place is in that sense. You know in lots of parts of America people have come from all over the place and they move back and forth and you don't have the sense of community that we have here.

GK: And when you - coming to something like this I'm sure you're talking to a lot of people here, what are some of the concerns that you hear about um... regarding coastal living and the fishing industry?

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AK: Well I've talked about - there's a big issue on the horizon where the Canadians have negotiated a trade deal with the Europeans that lowered the tariff on live lobsters from 8% to 0

and on processed or frozen lobsters from 16% to 0. So it's put the Canadians in a very strong competitive position with our industry and that's a real problem and so the question is, how do we do something about that? So that's an issue that we're talking about. Today several people have brought up what's called The Gray Zone, which is an area near the border downeast near the Canadian border where it's still not fully resolved as to whether it's Canadian water or US water and there's friction in there between the fishermen and what the jurisdiction is. One fella wanted to talk about health insurance, another wanted to talk about taxes. They talked about the steel tariff and how that might affect the price of a lobster trap.

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That was imposed yesterday. So a great variety. Met some high school students that are here that are concerned about the issues of whales and their interaction with the fishing community. So great cross-section, I was delighted to see a fairly large number of young people here.

GK: yeah it's great - the Skippers program is expanding things.

AK: That's a great program it's literally heartwarming.

GK: Yeah what are some of the hopes and fears for you personally about what's happening along the coast or in Maine?

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AK: Well, I think we're all concerned about climate change. And the effects are unclear at this time but they don't fill us with hope in the sense that if we continue... the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than any other body on earth except the Arctic Ocean. And we're not sure of all the implications of that. The other thing that's happening is as more and more CO<sub>2</sub> is in the atmosphere a good deal of it is captured in the ocean and turns into carbonic acid and that creates problems for shellfish to form their shells so we're talking about ramifications and impacts that are hard to measure but are none-the-less serious. I think the most serious is whether, what the effect of climate change will be on the lobster because I think I mentioned 80% of the fisheries is lobster and

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the lobster population in recent years has generally started to move north and east. There used to be a pretty vigorous lobster industry in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, it's practically all gone. We've had a great run of lobstering here in Maine when I left office as governor in the early 2000s the volume of the catch was - I remember the number - 58 million lbs. Last year it was something like 120 million lbs. So twice as much! But the question is can that be sustained? And what will be the impact of the warming of the water and nobody knows for sure but it's

something we'll have to be, we have to you know you can't just look to next season you gotta think about where we're gonna be five and ten years and this is a major concern.

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On the hope side, we've just had two, amazingly, two major announcements of aquaculture projects in Maine and it's interesting because it's a new kind of aquaculture. We've had aquaculture in Maine for 25 or 30 years but it's involved pens in the ocean, salmon particularly. And the fish are raised in the ocean in the pens and then they're brought out. These two new companies, one is Norwegian and the other is an American company. One is locating in Belfast, the other in Brunswick and they're gonna grow salmon on land in big tanks. So it deals with some of the environmental issues and some of the concerns about ocean based aquaculture but it's relatively new technology. People have been trying this and talking about it for years but these are major 100+ million dollar investments. the Norwegian one in Belfast they have a facility like this in Europe so we can sort of see how that works and what the impacts are

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but that's a hopeful sign. However, it's aquaculture, it's ocean related but there's a lot of different between working in a large enclosed facility on land in Belfast rather than being out on the water in a boat. So, yes they're both, they both involve sea creatures but the questions is, it's a change, it's a different way of thinking about making our living from the sea. But basically I've always supported aquaculture because I think it's a natural for Maine given our proximity to the ocean but we also have to maintain the wild fishery and hopefully have to bring back some of the offshore deep sea fishery - cod, mackerel, and those kinds of things. So... I'm always hopeful. The one thing we know of that there will be change, we don't know what the next 10 `or 20 years is gonna look like

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but Maine people are very ingenious and adaptable. And they tend to be able to make a success out of whatever nature deals 'em, and I think we're gonna see change significantly but I think we'll be ok.

GK: Can you talk a little bit about the idea of resilience? I know personally being from Stonington and thinking about the lobster industry declining in any way, climate change...

AK: it's hard to imagine because the lobster industry is so vibrant right now and so strong and it may remain that way, I don't want to sound like an alarmist in that I'm predicting disaster but I think we can't ignore the science and we can't ignore what's happening as I mentioned the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than any body of water on earth except the Arctic Ocean, that's gotta mean something

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because all of us are evolved to - including fish and lobsters - are evolved to meet and live with certain conditions. For example on the whales, apparently, what I learned this morning is the whales are moving north, they're spending more time in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and up towards Canada and that's because their food is moving north. Their little phytoplankton and I think it's phytoplankton, so we're just gonna have to as you say we're gonna have to be resilient and creative. Here's sort of a story - 125 years ago there was a really major industry in Maine. Employed a lot of people, brought in a lot of money to the state it was a very important natural-resource based industry that disappeared altogether by about 1920. It was called ice.

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There was a major business in Maine of people going out on the Kennebec River and lakes and ponds and cutting ice, shipping them down to Bath and Portland, putting them on ships, and they went all over the world. That was refrigeration. Well, along comes electricity and refrigeration, that whole industry disappeared. But you know we're still doing okay. So I think that's the story of Maine is that we adjust and we look for new products, new ways to make a living, same thing that's going on in the forest products industry. Traditionally it's been paper, pulp and paper, that's still important but we're also - I met with some guys just in my office in Washington two days ago from the let's see it's the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley California and they're finding new ways to use fiber from trees

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in things like 3D printing, in all kinds of new structural materials, we've got a new factory that's been announced in Millinocket to make what's called CLT Cross-Laminated Timber which will enable us to build tall buildings with wood. So again, the paper industry has been having tough times so now we're thinking about okay what else can we do with this fiber? And I think the same sort of thinking has to apply along the coast.

GK: Okay one more question for you - because you've got a couple more minutes.

AK: I don't.

GK: Thank you!

(Abrupt end)