

Oral Questions

Mr. Siddon: No commitments have been made. What we have done is we agreed to enter into—

Mr. Tobin: You don't know what you're talking about!

Mr. Siddon: —negotiation of the boundary issue. Those who are unwilling to negotiate are unfit to govern.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT CANCEL AGREEMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the Party that now governs made a commitment to provinces all across Canada that when their interests were at stake they would be full participants in negotiations. It was this Government that cut Atlantic Canadian provinces out of the deal completely. That is what this Government has done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1430)

Mr. Broadbent: Furthermore, the Minister has said that there is a surplus of cod. There is not a surplus.

Mr. Speaker: Will the Hon. Member please put his question?

Mr. Broadbent: My question to the Deputy Prime Minister is this. Since this deal that the Government has made is of an interim nature, and is opposed by all the Governments in Atlantic Canada that have spoken on it, and the industry opposes it, the fishermen oppose it, no rational Canadian, except in the Conservative Party, is in favour of it, will the Government now cancel the interim agreement?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, it is the folly of this place and this Question Period that questions of this type are purely designed to distort and exaggerate—

An Hon. Member: Resign!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Hon. Members would expect me to comment that the observations of the Hon. Minister are of great interest to me, but most of the time in this Chamber if those observations have to be made, I have to make them. Will the Minister please answer the question?

Mr. Siddon: I agree with you absolutely, Mr. Speaker, as always.

We have agreed with France to sit down between now and the end of the year and negotiate terms of reference by which the boundary dispute, which is a long and unresolved irritant, would be referred to compulsory third-party arbitration. In exchange, we have agreed to negotiate interim fishing arrangements with France which would help us to curb the overfishing problem.

Mr. Riis: Stop negotiating for us.

Mr. Siddon: Both of those initiatives are to be negotiated by December 31. Both will bring benefit to Atlantic fishermen. If, in the process, the demands of France exceed that which Canadian fishermen and Atlantic Governments can support, there will be no agreement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT MADE BY PREMIER OF NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries has said that he has cut back the cod quota for Canadian fishermen in the interests of conservation, then declares the cod surplus and gives them to the French.

An Hon. Member: That is right. Shame!

Mr. MacLellan: The Premier of Nova Scotia has said that Atlantic fisheries will lose at least \$200 million. He talks about cordial relations with—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would the Hon. Member please put his question?

Mr. MacLellan: Does the Minister say that the Premier of Nova Scotia does not know what he is talking about? Is this cordial relationship being paid for on the backs of Atlantic Canadian fishermen in the amount of at least \$200 million?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): I do not intend to comment on the remarks of the Premier of Nova Scotia.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: Go ahead.

Mr. Siddon: He also has not had very much time to reflect upon the elements of this agreement.

Mr. Broadbent: Keep going, that's good.

Mr. Siddon: If the Opposition would quit floundering around and listen for a moment—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tobin: You are an expert on floundering.

Mr. Siddon: —I would like to reflect on the comments yesterday of a former Liberal candidate and staffer in Prime Minister Trudeau's office who said:

"The fact that they (the French) put their names on a piece of paper is a great step forward," said Brian Flemming, Halifax lawyer and admiralty law expert.

IMPACT OF AGREEMENT ON CANADIAN FISHERMEN

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries. Is it true that, in making this agreement with France, the Minister has sold out the Canadian position by creating a floor