

Oral Questions

those large factory freezer trawlers can catch up to 12,000 tonnes of fish.

The Minister knows that the French fleet overfished their quota by 20,000 tonnes last year. When will the Minister stand up to the French fleet and fight for the rights of our fishermen?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, indeed this Government is taking initiatives to resolve finally and once and for all a problem which was started by the Government of which the Hon. Member was a part. It is a matter of history that nine French national fishing vessels have been fishing in 3PS since 1972 when the Trudeau Government accorded to France the right to fish in those waters without regard for the fact that that was indeed a Canadian resource.

Mr. Henderson: The Minister should know the difference between a wet-fish trawler and a factory freezer trawler.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, the Minister's own officials are quoted as saying that the French fleet will overfish by 25,000 metric tonnes. With nine factory freezer trawlers, I contend that it will be more like 60,000 metric tonnes. Will the Minister just sit on his hands and allow Atlantic Canadian fishermen to sit on the wharf twiddling their thumbs while they watch the French fleet take fish from their waters back to France?

● (1440)

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, the practice of licensing these nine French trawlers was initiated by the Government of which the Hon. Member was a part. Over the past several weeks this Government has been advancing negotiations with France which will end, once and for all, that exploitation of our resource which was legitimized in June of 1984 when the Hon. Member's Government agreed to turn a blind eye by way of an exchange of diplomatic notes to French overfishing in the 3PS area.

OBSERVANCE OF QUOTA BY FRENCH VESSELS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, it is not good enough simply to blame this situation on the previous Government. His Government has an obligation to deal responsibly with our fish resource. Can the Minister assure this House, and organizations such as the Newfoundland Fishermen's Union and the *Association des pêcheurs du Québec*, that the French will respect this quota? If not, why did he issue the licence?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Canada established a quota for France in the disputed area of 6,400 tonnes of cod. France insisted on its right to harvest 25,000 tonnes. That is why we

have sought an agreement with France, the final details of which will be announced shortly and which will see interim fishing arrangements established for this area for the first time in history.

REASON FOR GRANTING LICENCES

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the Minister did not answer the question. He did not give the House any assurance that this quota—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I know Hon. Members would not want to use preambles just to make a comment that the Minister may not have answered the question asked. The purpose of the supplementary is to ask a question which will evoke from the Minister the answer desired. I would ask the Hon. Member to put his question.

Mr. Manly: Can the Minister tell the House why he granted these licences before he had any assurance that Canadian quotas were going to be respected?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, may I repeat that in June of 1984 the previous Liberal Government agreed that each party in the disputed zone will abstain from regulating fishing vessels flying the flag of the other party. The solution to this problem is to be found by way of diplomatic negotiations and we are now very close to announcing an agreement which will establish a common management regime in that area.

CONDUCT OF CANADA-FRANCE NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans have instructed the Secretary of State for External Affairs "to manage our fisheries discussions with the French in a manner that does not jeopardize the cordial relationship between Canada and France." I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in these negotiations was the Minister party to the issuing of enough factory freezer trawler licences to the French not only to surpass their own quota seven times but to catch more fish than the allowable catch on the entire south coast of Newfoundland? Is the Minister planning on running in France in the next election?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, may I point out that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is not instructing the Secretary of State for External Affairs on this question. We are following a protocol established by the Government of which the Hon. Member was a part and which agreed not to interfere in the regulation of the fishery in the disputed area pending an acceptable settlement of the boundary issue which this Government is advancing very vigorously with France.

CANADIAN POSITION

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, in their desperation Newfoundland fishermen have actually been