

Oral Questions

sensitive issue, we must weigh on the one hand the interests of Canadian fishermen and fishing communities and on the other our bilateral relations with France.

That is a completely responsible statement from the Prime Minister.

Mr. Tobin: Obviously the French hand was a heck of a lot heavier than the hands of the Newfoundlanders which were stretched out asking for help, because you turned us away.

● (1425)

STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO MINISTER FROM NEWFOUNDLAND

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. This morning on VOXM's open-line in St. John's the Hon. Member for St. John's West said with respect to lack of consultation: "I can't see any legitimate defence of the fact that they were not present at this particular meeting. Let's just say that those responsible for this are certainly insensitive to the importance of the issue in Newfoundland and Labrador".

Clearly there is a split in the Cabinet over this issue. Will the Deputy Prime Minister declare this deal null and void, and fire the Minister of Fisheries, or will he leave the Hon. Member for St. John's West with no choice but to resign in protest against this bad decision for Newfoundland?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am not about to interpret the words of my hon. colleague. However, I can assure the Hon. Member that there is no split in Cabinet over this affair.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Siddon: From day one the Government of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, industry representatives, and other Atlantic provinces have known very well—

Mr. Tobin: Are you calling them all liars?

Mr. Siddon: —that our objective is to get France to agree to submit the unresolved boundary dispute to international arbitration so that we can stop once and for all their blatant overfishing of fish stocks which are for the benefit of the fishermen the Hon. Member represents, and which are being overfished to the extent of 20,000 tonnes per year, or \$40 million. That is the opportunity we seek to turn to the advantage of Newfoundland, about which the Hon. Member is saying that its Government could not possibly address and that we should not possibly address that challenge.

REQUEST MADE BY NEWFOUNDLAND PREMIER

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister on the same subject. I know he has assumed an interest in this subject.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister confirm that the Premier of Newfoundland wrote to the Prime Minister just before Christmas and made it very clear in his letter that the

Government of Newfoundland did not want any additional fishing rights given to France in one part of Canadian waters as an attempt to obtain a settlement of the dispute about St. Pierre and Miquelon? Will the Deputy Prime Minister confirm the existence of that letter? Will he tell us how it was possible that the Prime Minister of Canada could ignore such a request?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, of course the Government of Newfoundland does not want additional quotas given up to France in other parts of those waters, in particular the area known as 2J+3KL. But the Government has had to consider the possible advantage of eliminating once and for all the overfishing by France which is extracting from Canadian fishermen some \$40 million worth of value per year in exchange for some possible modest offsetting contributions elsewhere.

There is no commitment, and the Government will not make any such commitment between now and the end of the year without the full support of Newfoundland and the industry.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I return to the Deputy Prime Minister. The Minister of Fisheries has just said that a possible modest concession has been made. I point out to him that today the Premier of Nova Scotia said that that possible modest concession will cost Atlantic Canada \$200 million. It may be modest to the Minister but it is not modest to the people of Atlantic Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Since the Premier of Newfoundland has opposed this deal, since the Premier of Nova Scotia has opposed it, and since spokespersons for virtually every Atlantic Government are in opposition to it, can the Deputy Prime Minister explain to the House why the Government of Canada made a deal that pleases the people of France but is opposed by everyone in our Atlantic provinces?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Leader of the NDP would want to understand the facts as they are in truth. In fact no fish have been promised to France beyond the end of the present year, and those which have been promised to France within this year fall within the groundfish plan which has been negotiated fully with other Governments.

Mr. Tobin: Bull!

Mr. Siddon: There is a small exception in the area to the very north. Those are surplus cod stocks which have never been fished by Newfoundland and which we do not believe France will fish either.

Mr. Tobin: Come on, what are you talking about?