

NEED TO CONSERVE COD STOCKS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, we can always get an agreement if we are prepared to go down on our knees. In the fishery sector paper which the Minister tabled in November at the First Ministers' Conference it says:

Resources surplus to Canadian needs should be allocated to foreign fleets in accordance with bilateral treaty obligations and international law, but conditional primarily on conservation co-operation.

Why did the Minister, in violation of this agreement by provincial Fishery Ministers, agree with the French to give them an extra 15,000 tonnes when Canadian fishermen had been cut back in order to conserve stocks?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Hon. Members who like to fire first and ask questions later will read the text of the agreement which is being released in this hour, and the terms under which these negotiations will conclude. The Hon. Member will see that we have given nothing in addition to that contained in the 1987 groundfish plan which was published at the end of December, and nothing that industry was not well aware of in terms of contemplating the conditions under which this important boundary dispute would be referred for international arbitration.

● (1430)

REQUEST THAT AGREEMENT RATIFICATION BE POSTPONED

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, considering that even the codfather, who is a member of the Cabinet, does not agree with this process, will the Minister either postpone ratification or cancel this deal until it has been brought into conformity with the agreement that had been reached by the provincial Fisheries Ministers and is acceptable to the province and the people of Newfoundland?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to be known as the codfather, not my hon. colleague.

Mr. Rodriguez: You are a flounder.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Siddon: Some of the opposition Members are floundering.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Minister could answer the question as directly as possible.

Mr. Siddon: We had three choices in this serious matter of overfishing by France in a disputed area outside the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. They were to continue to ignore the overfishing, fight by way of direct confrontation between two nations, or negotiate. We chose the latter course—

Mr. Broadbent: Or to sell out.

Oral Questions

Mr. Siddon: —and have acted in the best interests of the Atlantic fishermen.

INTERESTS OF CANADIAN FISHERMEN

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. It concerns this outrageous decision to allow factory freezer trawlers from France into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Minister has not consulted the Premier of Newfoundland or the Premiers of the other three Atlantic provinces. He says that this agreement will go to arbitration. He knows that it will take four years and there will be nothing left to arbitrate. The Minister has given everything away.

When will he begin looking after the interests of the fishermen of Atlantic Canada, the fishermen of British Columbia, and certainly those most affected, the fishermen of Newfoundland especially in the area of the northern cod stocks?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this Minister is doing and will continue to do as we gradually and forcefully turn all of the fish resources within our 200-mile economic limit to the advantage of Canadian fishermen. While previous Governments may not have had the courage to address this serious question of sovereignty over our resources and tough negotiations with countries such as France, this Government does have the courage and is not giving away any interests of Canadian fishermen in the process.

Mr. Henderson: It does not take much courage to give everything away.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, we need someone who has a strong will to stand up to foreigners. How can the Minister decrease allocations for Canadian fishermen on the one hand while, on the other, give all our fish away to the foreigners? How can he do that and expect to have any kind of respect at all from the fishing industry?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the phraseology in the Hon. Member's question reveals his total misunderstanding and, I suggest, almost total ignorance of the situation. He referred to a total giveaway—

Mr. Tobin: Who are you trying to kid? You are the expert on ignorance.

Mr. Siddon: There has been no giveaway. In fact this is a positive step forward that is long overdue. It will pay many benefits to the industry in Atlantic Canada about which I have been maintaining close contact with the office of the Minister of Fisheries in Newfoundland and other representatives of the fishing industry.