

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Are there questions or comments?

The Chair recognizes the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) on debate.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port-au-Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, it is traditional to say when one stands in one's place that one is pleased to be in one's place to participate in a debate on a Bill or a motion. I am not at all pleased to be here today to speak on this motion. There is nothing happy about the occasion. There is a great deal that should leave most Canadians rather embarrassed about this occasion.

Canadians now know what this debate today is about. It is about, at the surface level, an arrest yesterday of a Canadian fishing vessel off the coast of Newfoundland, a Newfoundland fishing vessel, and that makes it a Canadian vessel. I should not have to say that but it seems that we have to remind ourselves of that today. On the surface that is what it is about, but only on the surface. It runs much deeper than the incident which filled up our television screens and which fills the front pages of our papers today.

What this debate is really about is what has occurred over the last three years in the relationship between Canada and France insofar as the joint use and management of Canadian waters and Canadian fish and the relationship we have had, the historic relationship, with the people of St. Pierre and indeed with France.

• (1240)

I am tired of hearing a Government that is so without a policy, so without a plan with respect to how to handle this difficulty, this dispute, that it has repeatedly talked about the fishing agreement of 1972. That agreement was signed 16 years ago and the Government drags it out as an explanation for what is happening in 1988. There is no more embarrassing position for a Government to be reduced to than a weak defence. The agreement of 1972 was primarily designed to get the French out of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the most over-utilized fish stock in the country. I am sure the Minister would acknowledge that fact. The agreement of 1972 got them out of the Gulf. They came out in 1987, 15 years later.

Mr. Siddon: They didn't have to.

Mr. Tobin: They are out of the Gulf. The agreement of 1972 spelled out specific quotas for the French.

Last January the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) in consultation with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon) sent a briefing note to the Government of France on our dispute. I have the briefing note in front of me. It was a formal note sent from the Secretary of State for External Affairs on January 27, 1987 to the Government of France. The following is what the Canadian Government said to the Government of France with respect to the 1972 treaty which is now being described as the cause of all our problems:

"The Embassy emphasizes that these quotas exceed the legal obligations of Canada resulting from the Canada-France Fisheries Treaty of March 27, 1972 and have been granted only so as to facilitate the process leading to the settlement of the dispute between Canada and France over the maritime claims of the two states off the coast of Canada and St. Pierre and Miquelon."

In a note to the Government of France, the Canadian Embassy said to France that we are giving you quotas that are far and away above and beyond our obligations under the 1972 treaty, and we are doing it as a gesture of goodwill to try to resolve this dispute. That is the 1972 treaty, and enough of that red herring.

What happened when the Government goes beyond the 1972 treaty and attempts to engender goodwill? I agree it is a reasonable attempt for the Government to make. I do not condemn the Government for that. It was an act of diplomacy. But how has it been answered? How has every act of diplomacy, good faith, and goodwill by Canada been answered by France? It has been answered, Mr. Speaker, with an arrogance that is born out of an illusion of an imperial power, with an arrogance that can only be attached to a nation with a colonial mentality.

What nonsense it is in 1988 that because of a small community called St. Pierre and Miquelon off the coast of North America, that France should claim a 200 mile limit off the coast of North America. What nonsense it is in 1988 that the Government of Canada should seriously negotiate such a claim by a nation that lives in the past with illusions of colonial powers. That is the real issue.

What have we seen from our attempts to be reasonable? We have seen the Governor General of Canada, and Canadians will recall since it was recorded in the news services of this country, go to France and be repeatedly insulted by no less a person than the Prime Minister of France. The Right Hon. Jeanne Sauv , who embodies Canada when she travels abroad, was insulted and deliberately so. That was the response to the gesture of goodwill.

Last summer the Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland, and a very distinguished Member of this House for nearly 30 years, the Hon. James McGrath, for the first time in two decades was denied the right to visit the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. This has been done for decades as a gesture of friendship between Newfoundland and St. Pierre. For the first time in decades the Lieutenant-Governor was told that he was not welcome in the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. That is how France answers the gesture of goodwill.

We saw France take a vessel with four French politicians and deliberately ask that they be arrested. They made it impossible for Canada not to arrest them. That is how France answered our gesture of goodwill. Yesterday we saw France in the most ridiculous action of all and the greatest insult of all, not arresting a Canadian vessel with Canadian politicians looking for cheap press, not arresting a Canadian vessel that