

Adjournment Debate

Today, as never before in our history, the United States is imposing quotas on the importation of salt fish. The United States is objecting to Newfoundlanders catching salmon off the north and east coasts of Newfoundland. The federal Government is saying that we may be at fault and it may prevent people from catching salmon. In fact, only 1 per cent of the salmon that are caught are judged to be heading toward American waters.

The West German fleet has come into Canadian waters and over-fished a quota many times. We heard the complaints of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) to the EEC. The EEC told him where to go. He was told that they were not over-fishing any quotas and would not give orders to the West German fleet. That continued month after month. As we all know, the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization deals with over-fishing outside the 200 mile limit. That organization was not even informed of the over-fishing outside the 200 mile limit by the Government of Canada until all the German boats were filled up and had left the area. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans stood up and said he was pleased to announce that the boats would be leaving "tomorrow". Of course they had to leave "tomorrow", because they were all filled up.

To add insult to injury, after the EEC quota had been violated the Government of Canada issued further quotas to the English and French fleets. That is absolutely disgraceful. Canadian fishermen are now objecting to this over-fishing. In public conversations everywhere we hear accusations of bribes and pay-offs. This is happening because the Government of Canada has taken no action whatsoever against foreign nations for over-fishing in Canadian waters.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans should tell us why the West Germans were not stopped and why he gave the EEC more fishing authority under the same quota that had been violated three times. He should stand up and admit to the people of Canada that there is a standing agreement with the French Government that the French fleet can do no harm on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, that it can over-fish all it wants because of an agreement with External Affairs, that External Affairs is conducting negotiations with the French Government over the territorial sea around St. Pierre et Miquelon thereby External Affairs says to the Department of Fisheries, "No, we can't do anything about the French fleet. The French fleet can over-fish all it wants and will not be stopped".

● (1805)

All this should be explained by the Minister of Fisheries. He should tell the truth, that the Department of External Affairs, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the federal Cabinet are the ones setting the policy. They are the ones responsible for over-fishing. They are the ones now responsible for all the accusations about bribes and pay-offs on the east coast of Canada to fisheries observers and employees of the federal Department of Fisheries. That is the reason for this conversation and why we have fishermen saying that "we are all right.

We are going to fish although our quotas are gone in herring and several other species".

Everyone knows over-fishing is going on. Everyone knows observers and fisheries officers are reporting it. Everyone wonders why no action is taken. Why no action at all? Everyone is wondering why the Minister of Fisheries will not come clean, and why the Government of Canada will not do something. Everyone wonders why the firing pins have been taken out of the guns. People want to know the answers to all kinds of questions, Mr. Speaker.

I conclude that the Minister of Fisheries is being governed in his fisheries policy by the Government of Canada through the Department of External Affairs and by a policy that says we would rather negotiate, we would rather discuss, and we do not want to do anything that will upset our trade relations with the EEC or upset the United States because of free trade, or upset the French because we are negotiating over the territorial limits of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

The Minister of Fisheries should stand up and be counted. The Minister of Fisheries should get out from under that cloak of the Government of Canada. If he does not, we will see fishermen on the east coast of Canada fishing beyond quotas. We will see nets out in the water where nets should not be, because those fishermen know from watching the television news that these serious violations are taking place and that this Government of Canada for several reasons will not do anything about it.

Mr. Mel Gass (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear my friend across the way raising some of these very important issues affecting the fishery of Atlantic Canada.

This was the first year since Canada extended its jurisdiction to 200 miles that FRG vessels fished outside the Canadian 200 mile zone on the "Nose of the Grand Bank". As the area in which they were fishing was outside Canadian jurisdiction, and there is no NAFO regulation in place, the view in Europe was that there was no legal framework in place to prohibit this fishery.

As the portion of the NAFO Division 3L in issue is outside the Canadian zone, Canada did not have the right to order the vessels to stop fishing. We were instead invoking what we saw as certain obligations to which the European Community has subscribed in the Long Term Agreement with Canada on Fisheries, in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Convention, and in the law of the Sea Convention.

● (1810)

Canada, through diplomatic and ministerial channels, confronted the European Economic Community and the FRG with its serious concern about the conservation of the cod stock which overlaps into this area, and the impact such overfishing would have on it. Canadian representatives sought the cessation of this fishery. On May 9, the last two FRG vessels left the area.