

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, if one were to use the Hon. Member's interpretation, I suspect that Canadians would translate this into being a bad deal. However, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has very clearly indicated the process which was established, and the options which were available. When the Minister of Fisheries speaks, he speaks on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Dingwall: It is rather telling that the Deputy Prime Minister refuses to answer that very specific question.

REQUEST FOR MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): The Deputy Prime Minister is also aware that the consultation process was aborted. The Premier of Newfoundland, the Premier of Nova Scotia, the industry and, more important, the primary producers, are outraged at the failure of the Government to represent their interests. In view of the authority the Deputy Prime Minister has, will he not now demand the resignation of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and rescind this unconscionable agreement?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to inform the Hon. Member that I was advised by the Minister of Fisheries that the Government of Newfoundland was involved in the discussions and negotiations, through its negotiating representative, the Minister of Fisheries, and representatives of the Minister of Fisheries, as well as representatives of the Premier's office.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Why did you apologize?

• (1430)

Mr. Mazankowski: I apologized for an inadvertent breakdown in that process which, in my view, was certainly not deliberate. The fact of the matter is that what we have achieved here is an agreement to negotiate. As the Minister of Fisheries has outlined, as have others in the House, it was the best of the three possible options available to us.

OVERFISHING BY FRENCH FLEET

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, we now know what PC means—Paris Cares.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Shields: Say that again; we missed it.

Mr. Hees: Another rehearsal was needed, John.

Mr. de Jong: You sure have stirred them up.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. It is clear that the Minister has said to the House and in the agreement that all he has is an agreement to negotiate an agreement. That might take four years. The French fleet has been overfishing in Canadian waters. It will continue to overfish in Canadian waters. What does the Minister intend to do about the French fleet's continued overfishing in Canadian waters?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I trust that when the Hon. Member says that he now knows what PC refers to he recognizes that it stands for perfect Canadians?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Siddon: What we have succeeded in doing, after years of inattention to a very costly and serious problem for all of Canada, is to sit down with the Government of France over the next 11 months—

Mr. Riis: No one wants to hear you, Tom.

Mr. Siddon: Then they had better stop asking questions, my friend.

Mr. Riis: On your side.

Mr. Siddon:—and negotiate the terms of reference by which an important costly boundary dispute will be referred to international arbitration over some four years of time and, in parallel with that, to negotiate in turn fishing arrangements which could include measures of control which have never before been achieved to deal with the French overfishing in 3PS. The Hon. Member should celebrate that instead of criticizing it.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the people of Newfoundland, the fishermen, the owners of fish plants, the Government of Newfoundland and the Government of Nova Scotia all think that this is a give-away and a sell-out, what makes the Minister think that he has such a great deal going when he did not even follow the advice and consultation of the parties involved? What does he think he has going?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the essence of political leadership, not opposition mentality, is to have the courage sometimes to stand up and explain a course of action which has not previously been contemplated in the face of carping and unhelpful criticism of the sort we are hearing from opposition Members who would not want the fishermen of Atlantic Canada to be better off than they would have them be and as they have been for many years.