

S.O. 29

I might say that we feel it important to recognize that not one fish has been placed on the bargaining table. We have offered to talk about the possibility of a very modest allocation in the area which is so important and precious to Newfoundland, referred to as the northern cod area or 2J+3KL. I can assure the House that the French have great designs on very large allocations of cod in that alternate location and that the Government will resist any such claim on their part.

We are talking about solving the problem of overfishing to the extent of tens of thousands of tonnes per year. We must put before the people of Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada the question, what is the price they are willing to pay to have the matter resolved? Our commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is that any price which is too high for Newfoundland and Labrador is too high for Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Siddon: I think, therefore, it is important that our friends and neighbours in France give witness to this debate and the discussions that have been taking place in Canada over the last two or three days. It is important that they realize that the people of Canada, and particularly the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, will not stand for some other significant tradeoff in order to resolve this boundary dispute for all the reasons the Hon. Leader of the NDP and my other colleagues have presented in this discussion.

I will take a moment or so to comment on the remaining matter, which is this supposed allocation of 15,600 tonnes of new fish to get this deal. That misinterpretation and the exaggeration and mischievousness with which it has been used is typical of the disruptive tactics of the Opposition which so often prevent Canada from moving in an orderly way toward a desirable goal. In the year 1987, 15,600 tonnes of Atlantic fish resources will indeed be fished by France under arrangements that have been fully negotiated with all the Atlantic provinces and with the industry, and which are in full accord with our 1987 groundfish plan and our international commitments to France.

Mr. Gauthier: Enough. Enough is enough.

Mr. Siddon: Of that portion, 8,000 tonnes—

Mr. Gauthier: You're way over your time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) has asked for an emergency debate on a matter which the Speaker thinks is very important. As a consequence, I granted the application. We have listened to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon) and, strictly speaking, his time has expired. The Minister has asked to be allowed to speak for a few more minutes. It would seem to me to be reasonable if there is consent. Is there such consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Siddon: Mr. Speaker, I will not take too long, but I think it is important that I conclude this information in its entirety. I have a list here of some 15,600 tonnes of allocations which the present Opposition have been bandying about as a giveaway. In fact, the allocations are contained within the 1987 groundfish plan, are fully supported by industry and are fully supported by the provinces. These allocations include the 6,400 tonnes granted to France in the disputed area, part of the Canadian generosity, as France has always been granted that consideration. As well, there are 1,545 tonnes under the long-term agreement which we have with the European Economic Community and even 2,400 tonnes of squid which they have never managed to catch.

There is no giveaway here. There is one exception, and that is that in the very far northern area of 2GH, with full knowledge of all the industry advisers and the Province of Newfoundland, an additional 3,000 tonnes of surplus cod which was never caught by Canadian fishermen or foreign vessels has been made available for 1987 only. That fish will probably not be caught at all because France did not even go into those northern waters last year. I believe it is far better that they go way up north off the shores of Greenland than to fish our stocks off the Grand Banks or in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. That is the only price that has been paid for this year. It is a non-existent price to bring this matter, through the negotiation of these two parallel agreements, to the point where we can resolve the boundary dispute once and for all.

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It is important that governments have the courage, from time to time, to negotiate difficult issues of this nature. Leadership demands the courage to negotiate. Opposition amounts to an abdication of that kind of leadership. This deal will be very good for all Atlantic Canadians or we will not proceed as the negotiations unfold. I can assure all Members of the House that the provinces, the industry and the fishermen will be fully involved in all discussions between now and the end of December, 1987.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I am sure this will only take a couple of moments. I do not need 20 minutes to explain why this particular announcement by the federal Government cannot be accepted by Canadian fishermen. It cannot be accepted by anyone who knows anything at all about the issue. It cannot be accepted because the Government has taken fishing quotas from Canadians. We have now discovered that behind the scenes, in secret, the Government has given those quotas to foreign fleets.

Mr. Siddon: Nonsense. Be reasonable.

Mr. Baker: The Hon. Minister is telling me to be reasonable. He should speak to fishermen on the northeast coast of Newfoundland who cannot even get enough fish to feed their families or 10 unemployment insurance stamps for the year—