

S.O. 29

I could take more time to talk about the different zones involved in this issue. It has become so complicated that we can no longer simply refer to the East Coast, West Coast or Gulf of St. Lawrence, but must describe them by names and numbers. Perhaps that would have been unnecessary if our fishing grounds were not raped years and years ago. Fish stocks would still be abundant and available to everyone. The fact is we do not have enough fish to meet our own domestic demands. That is why I am concerned. It is not satisfactory to me to bargain away any of 2J+3KL fish to the French, but we have to ask ourselves if that is the only alternative to stop the overfishing on the St. Pierre Bank, or what is now called 3PS. And if industry and the provinces agree, then we might have to make a sacrifice—and if we have to make a sacrifice, no matter how small it is, it will be too much as far as I am concerned—so we can ensure the fish stocks on the St. Pierre Bank.

• (2250)

At one time the draggers from Burin could go out and the fishermen would not even have a chance to get their rubber clothes off before they were back with a load. That was at a time long gone, but the same thing cannot be said for today. But if we have to make some concessions, and if it is agreed to by the Government of Newfoundland and the Governments of the other Atlantic Provinces, and by the fishermen—in other words, if it is satisfactory to the people of Canada—then I believe it is wrong for the Opposition to do what it is doing. I realize that the Opposition has a role to play and that role is to attack the Government, but somewhere along the line our responsibility to the people who elected us must come first. That is the reason I say that members of the Opposition should not condemn the Government for everything it tries to do. Opposition Members can say: “What you did was not good enough. We wish you had done better”, but they should not condemn just for the sake of condemning. I do not think that is the role of a good opposition Member. But maybe I am wrong. I do not know. I have never been in opposition and I am not looking forward to it, either. Because of what I believe in I can go back and face the people in my riding with the same dignity with which I came here.

The French have taken the position that they will not agree to refer the boundary dispute to an international tribunal in the absence of an agreement on French quotas in Canadian waters for the period from 1988 to 1991, the period required for an international tribunal to determine the boundaries. I am sure that if we were the people seeking jurisdiction over an island belonging to Canada off the coast of France, we would take the same position. That does not mean that the agreement which was signed last week in France is binding on the Government to give fish to France in 2J+3KL. I think members of the Opposition owe it to the people of Newfoundland to enlighten them and tell them the fish are not being given away, it is only up for negotiation in the hope of getting a better deal from the French on their overfishing on the St. Pierre Bank, better known as 3PS.

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech given by the Hon. Member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception (Mr. Johnson). I must say there is no doubt in my mind that the Hon. Member, in his remarks this evening, was quite sincere. That Hon. Member has always demonstrated to this House and to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans that he is quite sincere. However, the Hon. Member is on the government side. I was amused to hear him say he was never in the Opposition. Well, I can tell the Hon. Member, as nice a person as he is, that if the Government continues to make decisions like this, the decision it made on the softwood lumber and other decisions it has made since it became the Government, the Hon. Member will never be in the Opposition. He will never be back in Government. He will not be elected.

One must look at how this situation affects the livelihood of the people in Atlantic Canada, especially those people in the Province of Newfoundland. The fishery, as we all know, Mr. Speaker, is the lifeblood of the people of Newfoundland. That is what they brought to Canada at Confederation. Their past has been the fishery. For the Government and this Minister to make a deal such as this and to have issued licences for nine factory freezer trawlers in 3PS for the metropolitan fleet from France to fish in Canadian waters, is totally intolerable.

Mr. Crosbie: It is your treaty. Come on. Be honest.

Mr. Henderson: It is not our treaty at all.

Mr. Crosbie: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Henderson: The factory freezer trawlers were no part of our treaty and the Hon. Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) knows that, if he wants to be fair. It has nothing to do with the treaty of the past Government.

I must tell the Minister that if he knew anything about the fishing industry at all, he would know the difference between a factory freezer trawler and a wet fish trawler. Exactly the same comparison would be between a Volkswagen and a bus.

Mr. Baker: The Speaker knows.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, the Speaker knows full well.

Mr. Baker: He can give lessons to the present Minister.

Mr. Henderson: There is no question about that. These are very large vessels. They are floating factories. For this Minister to register and licence nine of those vessels to come into Canadian waters just so the Minister, and especially the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), could have some sort of cozy agreement later on with France on other issues, is disgraceful.

Let us look at this agreement, which everyone says is no agreement, and I agree it is not an agreement as such. It is possibly an agreement to negotiate. I do not even see where there is any stipulation by France, even after being given all these rights, that it has even to sit down and negotiate.