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not give a good continental about the people and the fishermen of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

We are doing this for the fishermen and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and trying to get this issue settled so we can stop this tragic overfishing in 3PS. A whole series of negotiations broke down in Ottawa in the week ending Friday, January 16. However, they started again last week. By the way, there was consultation. The Government of Newfoundland was informed that this meeting was going ahead, and what types of things might be agreed at the meeting, and they did not agree with it. They have the right to be consulted. They have the right to encourage. They have the right to discourage. They have the right to warn. But we are the Government of Canada that has the responsibility for the external relations of Canada, and we do not intend to abdicate our responsibility as a national Government. So, Mr. Speaker, they did warn. They did not agree with this particular process.

What agreement was reached? All that was reached was an agreement to negotiate. There is no agreement that France will even get a tadpole from 2J+3KL. What was agreed in Paris on Friday and Saturday was that France would engage in negotiations which would start before March 15 for the purpose of concluding an agreement to submit to compulsory third party settlement of the dispute of the maritime claims of the two countries off the coast of St. Pierre and Miquelon in Canada. In return, Canada would engage in negotiations to determine the annual fishing quotas for French vessels in Canadian waters for the period 1988-1991 inclusive while this arbitration is going on, and that those quotas will include cod quotas in NAFO Divisions 2J+3KL. In other words, we are prepared to discuss and engage in negotiations about that. There has been no agreement to do anything in 2J+3KL. There is nothing but an agreement to enter into negotiations.

The proof of that is in Premier Peckford's press release of January 27 where he points out that this is the case, that there is not a binding agreement to go to arbitration. While he is right there, he should not forget the other side of the coin. There is no binding agreement for us to give one codfish, or piece of one codfish in 2J+3KL to France. That is the exact position.

Supposing that we do reach an agreement with France some time between March and the end of the year, it will be an agreement that I will be able to defend in every hamlet and cove of Newfoundland and Labrador. It will be an agreement that I will not be afraid to go and defend in every hamlet and cove in Newfoundland and Labrador. For 20 years I have upheld the rights of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I do not intend to cease now. I do not need lessons from anyone in that direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: The Premier of Newfoundland stated that he was displeased with the statement that I made yesterday on this matter. He says my statement that there is no agreement as to what these annual fishing quotas should be, that there is

no agreement to give France any quota in 2J+3KL, is contrary to the agreement. I say that it is not contrary to the agreement. That is exactly in accord with the agreement. When the Premier says that he is displeased with me, I say that I conduct myself according to my conscience. Whether Premiers are displeased with me, or Prime Ministers are displeased with me, or opposition Members are displeased with me, I care not a twit, as long as I know that I am behaving in a proper fashion. I am prepared to go back to my own people and ask them whether they are pleased or displeased any time, against anyone, under any circumstance.

I have not too much time left, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is making an outcry, and I am sympathetic with their outcry. The more they outcry the more likely it is that the firmer the people will be who are negotiating for us in this matter. I do not want an agreement that is not a good agreement for Canada. It is good for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to show how they value the Northern Cod. It is our fishing industry, it is our life in Newfoundland the same as the wheat fields are the life of Saskatchewan, or oil and gas might be the life of Alberta. That is why the Government of Newfoundland and the industry and union representatives should never have been left out of this last week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: It is good for the people of Newfoundland to show their concerns. But I tell the people of Newfoundland now, Mr. Speaker, their interests have and will be observed. There is no agreement damaging to them. I ask the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, and the Leader of the Liberal Party to suggest to us how else they would go about resolving this question. It is all well and good to hear their rhetoric and what they would do, and the terrible things that we are doing when they left us, particularly the Official Opposition, the captive of these three international agreements.

Now the Member for Gander-Twillingate, and the others, have the audacity and the gall to stand up and decry what we are doing in our efforts to solve this situation to help the fishermen and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. When this matter is concluded, and it is far from concluded, the agreement we reach, if there is an agreement reached, will be one that we can defend in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in every part of Canada, and I and my cohorts here in Newfoundland pledge that, and we will see that any agreement reached is in the interests of our fishermen in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here tonight to participate in this debate. I have to say at the outset that I am also saddened this evening. The importance to Newfoundlanders of the matter that is being discussed this evening is as important as the last great decision that was taken which affected our province.