

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FISHERIES

CANADA-FRANCE AGREEMENT—POSITION OF MINISTER OF TRANSPORT

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago the Minister of Transport told Atlantic Canadians that if they compared themselves to people in the Third World they would feel quite lucky in Canada. We should have known at that time that any Minister who had the audacity to make such an outrageous statement would not be representing Atlantic Canadians in cabinet. We know through recent events that the Minister and the Cabinet are in fact now trying to make us a part of the Third World.

Does the Minister of Transport really think that a show of strength by our Coast Guard in patrolling the East Coast is tantamount to, in his words, "going to war"? Why is he promoting the defeatist attitude that we have no choice but to flip over into a deadman's float?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would sooner be afloat than be a goat.

Mr. Kaplan: You are both.

Mr. Crosbie: The Government is bound by an arrangement concluded in the form of an exchange of diplomatic notes dated June 20 and June 28, 1984, with regard to the disputed area 3Ps, pursuant to which each party agreed to abstain from regulating the vessels flying the flag of the other party in that zone.

Our Liberal predecessors, Senators De Bané and MacEachen, and their Government entered into an international agreement which prevents us from interfering with or harassing the vessels of France in that disputed zone.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, this is an inconsistent Minister in an inconsistent Cabinet. The one thing they are consistent about is blaming things on the previous administration. The Government is into its third year. There is only one year left after that. By its record it will then be a previous administration.

MINISTER'S CALL FOR APOLOGY

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): The Minister was not talking about the previous administration last night when he said, "I think the Government should apologize". Who did the Minister have in mind to make that apology? Was it the Minister of State for External Affairs, who is perhaps the most to blame in this issue; the Prime Minister, who does not want to muddy the waters for the French summit; or the Minister of Fisheries, who has been hung out to dry like a codfish on this issue and still thinks he is swimming?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, one thing the previous Government never did was apologize for anything. However, I suggest that they apologize today because it was that Government which entered into agreements in 1972, 1982 and in 1984 which make it very difficult for the Government of Canada to take any firm, effective action today to settle this matter on the East Coast of Canada. They hung us with the dead hand of the past.

• (1420)

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate is on his third question. I would ask him to be brief and to the point.

REQUEST THAT AGREEMENT BE CANCELLED

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I will move from the Minister who advocates the deadman's float to the Minister who is a specialist in belly flops. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said in the Chamber last night: "if the fishermen and Governments of Atlantic Canada do not accept the conditions, there will be no agreement". Will the Minister now own up to his words, because the Atlantic Premiers have said no and the fishermen have said no. Will the Minister honour his words and tear up this record of agreement?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I have indicated several times in the House that it is important that all Atlantic Canadians understand that the only agreement is to negotiate the reference of the boundary dispute to compulsory third party arbitration, and to negotiate corresponding fisheries arrangements for the period after 1988. If, in negotiating those two agreements between now and the end of the year, the conditions required by France are unsatisfactory to the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador and Atlantic Canada, then there will indeed be no agreement.

ALLOCATION OF QUOTAS TO FRENCH FISHING VESSELS

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canadians, especially Newfoundlanders, are very angry with the Minister because he has given the French fleet extra quotas and licences for factory freezer trawlers just to get the French to sit down and talk about the possibility of negotiating an arbitration case. Now that he has paid part of the ransom to the French for this deal, how much more Canadian fish must he give up in order to get the French even to come to arbitration?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I suggest this question also underscores the regrettable tendency and, I suggest, irresponsible tendency of members of the Opposition to sow seeds of fear, worry and apprehension based on improper and, I suggest, incorrect facts. In this case no additional quotas which are used, contained, and fished by Canadian fishermen will be given to France