

S.O. 29

Most alarming was to hear from the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) that we should have put our war boats in the water and that we should have used military force to deal with this issue. That, Mr. Speaker, is not the Canadian way. I suggest that that is not a route to be followed by any leader of a civilized nation. There are easier, better and more effective ways of solving a problem. There are more mature ways in the international community to resolve a problem than to pursue such aggression. The need for determination of the boundary, as I said, has become serious because of French overfishing in the area.

France has been taking advantage of the fact that the boundary has not been settled. In these circumstances, Canada cannot enforce Canadian fishing regulations in the large area France claims off the south coast of Newfoundland. The French fleets have expanded their fishery in this area to an enormous extent. While the customary share for France of a total allowable catch for cod in the area off the south coast of Newfoundland was 6,400 tonnes in 1986 and is again in 1987, in fact the French fleet caught approximately 26,000 tonnes of cod and had planned to take approximately 25,000 tonnes in 1987. This rate of overfishing produces a total catch of about 60,000 tonnes as compared with a total allowable catch established by Canada of 41,000 tonnes.

This represents a serious risk to the cod stock off the south coast of Newfoundland which is rapidly becoming depleted. The French have taken a position that they will not agree to refer the boundary dispute to an international tribunal in the absence of another agreement. Again, that underlies the whole point that there is no agreement to debate. There is simply a consensus as to a mechanism for resolving a very difficult international problem, and the resolution of this problem has eluded Liberal Governments that have preceded us.

As a Nova Scotian Member of Parliament, I feel that I must respond and I must comment on a press release which was telexed to me from Gordon E. Cummings, President and Chief Executive Officer of National Sea Products Limited.

Mr. Forrestall: He is not a Nova Scotian.

Mr. O'Neil: He is not a Nova Scotian but a resident. He is from Bay Street and is an active member of the Liberal Party. The press release reflects concern about the fishing industry and much concern about the political industry. The telex is really without basis in fact. It criticizes the Government and suggests that the Government of Canada has taken fish from Nova Scotia fishermen. This is clearly not true. The suggestion being put forward is that Nova Scotian jobs will be lost. This is not true, Mr. Speaker. If anything is true, this whole issue indicates the drive with which the Government of Canada is attempting to secure employment for the fishermen of Canada and the fishing processors.

Mr. Foster: He should be asked to resign.

Mr. O'Neil: I would like to join with my colleague, the Hon. Member for South West Nova (Mr. Comeau) in expressing

my deep regret upon reading in the provincial newspaper of Nova Scotia that this same Mr. Cummings viewed this communication with the Government of France as an attempt to gain votes in Quebec. What is being said and articulated and I believe what is being revealed is bigotry. Why bring the people of Quebec into this debate as we negotiate with the Government of France? I have the honour to represent an area that has thousands of people who speak the French language. Why were the thousands of Acadians not singled out? This is a reference that I find most objectionable and offensive. It is an attempt to introduce, if you will excuse the expression, Mr. Speaker, a red herring.

• (0110)

When people cannot deal with the facts in a debate, they try to put up straw men. This reference in *The Chronicle Herald* forces me to conclude that this particular gentleman is unprepared to deal with the facts, that he does not know what the facts are and that those facts do not support the conclusion that he wants to reach in any case.

There may be some legitimate complaints that can be raised about the lack of communication in the last week but let those complaints be complaints about the lack of communication, not an attack on the merits of a worth-while initiative. Let those complaints be recognized for what they are. They are simply a criticism indicating that perhaps there was not sufficient consultation and communication.

I do not believe that it is correct for anyone to suggest that all of this has been a tremendous surprise. Negotiations have been ongoing for months in this entire issue. It was inevitable that a point would be reached as it was on the weekend. The issues and options did not change that much and a choice was made. It was a choice that was on the table for some time.

As I prepare to close, I as other Members of Parliament from Atlantic Canada want to state my commitment to ensuring that the fishing industry, the backbone of the economy of Atlantic Canada, will continue to be well and aggressively represented by Members of Parliament from Atlantic Canada. We will ensure that Members of Parliament in the Progressive Conservative caucus speak with an independent voice and are not trained seals. We were not the ones who sat in this Chamber in 1972, 1982 and 1984 when the federal Government of the day executed agreements with the Government of France and the European Economic Community, agreements that signed away the fishing resource that properly belonged to the people of Atlantic Canada. That is the issue to which the Liberal Opposition must respond but they refuse to address it. In the days that follow, that is the issue that Liberal Members will be forced to address by the people of Atlantic Canada who are listening tonight and hearing the facts. They will want to hear an explanation of the activities of the Liberal Government in those years. They will applaud the efforts of this Government and the Members of Parliament from Atlantic Canada to put behind us those mistakes and to secure for all time and for all Canadians the