

S.O. 29

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broad-bent) has applied today for an emergency debate. The Chair has ruled in favour of that application. I would ask Hon. Members to contain themselves enough so that the debate can in fact continue. The Hon. Minister.

Mr. Siddon: As I was saying, Members of the Government at that time in June, 1984 agreed that French national vessels could be allowed to fish unimpeded in the disputed zone—

Mr. Baker: What do you mean unimpeded?

Mr. Siddon: I could read the language of the agreement.

Mr. Baker: Yes, read the language.

Mr. Siddon: The language of the agreement, confirmed by an exchange of diplomatic notes, is as follows:

Each party in the disputed zone will abstain from regulating fishing vessels flying the flag of the other party in the disputed zone.

Mr. Baker: From boarding.

Mr. Siddon: As a consequence of the inability of previous governments to deal with this problem, we are today faced with a decision taken by the Le Bretagne arbitration. This was another consequence of the dispute settlement provisions of the treaty of 1972. It now allows large factory freezer trawlers, up to the numbers designated in the 1972 treaty, to fish in that disputed zone and be immune from the Canadian regulatory regime. In other words, from France's perspective, that is France's territorial waters and we have no right to enforce or administer fishing quotas in that region.

Mr. Benjamin: Why act like the Liberals?

Mr. Siddon: In that disputed zone, which in fisheries jargon is referred to as 3PS, Canada under the protocols of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization has established quotas for the present year of 41,000 tonnes of Atlantic cod, and we have generously, for some years, granted to the French national vessels, particularly the vessels of St. Pierre and Miquelon, a quota of 6,400 tonnes for this year. That is not something new. That has been established practice for several years. In return, France believes that that entire quota of 41,000 tonnes is essentially a French quota and has been persistently overfishing that quota. We know from records which have been confirmed that in 1986, France overfished that quota by an amount in excess of 20,000 tonnes of codfish. That overfishing in this disputed zone represents lost income and lost opportunity to the people of Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada amounting to over \$40 million of landed value to the fishermen.

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The point is that as long as the disputed zone exists and Canada is not able to enforce and manage the fishery in that zone, there will be a blatant abuse of the resource to the detriment of Atlantic Canada and, particularly, the fishermen

of southern Newfoundland. Therefore, the Government has three choices. We have been well aware of the particular problems of these three options. We can ignore the situation as it has been ignored for many years. We can face the French in confrontation as the Hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party has astonishingly suggested or we can try to negotiate a solution which once and for all will eliminate the massive overfishing by France in an area which Canada believes to be its own.

The problem has become particularly complicated this year because, under the provisions of the 1972 treaty, the French national vessels, the so-called metropolitan fleet, were allowed to fish in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for 15 years. Last year they took a quota of 17,000 tonnes. That treaty provision has expired. We have essentially booted those French vessels out of the Gulf and they want somewhere to go. They do not want to go home to France so they have concentrated their fishing pressure on this disputed zone at great risk to the stocks in that area. That is why it is extremely critical that Canada, at this juncture, decide either to negotiate a lasting solution to this problem or to confront these vessels originating from France, even with military force as the Hon. Leader of the NDP has, I believe, so irresponsibly suggested. I think that would be a premature step. Therefore, I want to explain why it is we feel we have taken a major step forward. Then I will talk about the so-called tradeoffs or the price to which the mover of this motion has referred.

We have secured a signed agreement from France, not to take a certain number of fish from Canadian waters or to establish a specific boundary to resolve this problem once and for all, but to negotiate two agreements by December 31, 1987. The first agreement would be to develop the legal terms of reference, or *compromis* as it is called in diplomatic jargon, under which this issue would be referred to the compulsory third-party dispute settlement provisions under international law. We would celebrate the fact that France has finally come to accept that this important matter must be referred to international dispute settlement procedures.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Siddon: Coupled with the agreement to negotiate terms of reference, France has also agreed to negotiate by December 31, 1987 a set of interim fishing arrangements for the period between 1988 and 1991 during which this dispute settlement process will unfold.

In that context, we have not promised to give any fish quotas away, and it will certainly be an objective of this Government in the negotiation of those interim fishing arrangements for a four-year period to ensure that the French overfishing in the disputed zone is curtailed and curtailed drastically.

Second, it is our objective to ensure that those fishing arrangements and whatever quotas are allocated to France are decided in the context of discussions with the fishermen of Atlantic Canada, with the Government of the Province of Newfoundland and with the industry generally.