

Supply

External Affairs officials in Ottawa were in contact twice last evening and again this morning by telephone with Captain Willoughby who assured them that all the crew were well and in good spirits. He proposed to have their families advised by telephone of their well-being.

An External Affairs officer has gone to St. Pierre to assist with the consular representation of the members of the crew. The Canadian Government will continue to follow matters closely and will take whatever action is appropriate in the light of developments.

The Acting Speaker Mr. Paproski: Are there any questions or comments? Debate. The Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud).

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate (Mr. Baker) which says, and I quote:

That this House deplore the unlawful arrest of a Canadian fishing vessel by the Government of France in Area 3PS off the coast of Newfoundland; and

That this House condemn the Government for its failure to protect the Canadian fishing industry and its continuing inability to resolve the Canada-France fishing dispute.

Mr. Speaker, I deplore yesterday's events, first of all because here we have the captain of a fishing vessel and his crew who were arrested for working at the only trade they know, which means going out to sea, fishing and bringing their catch safely back to port for processing in the plants on shore, thus providing jobs for the families that live there. These fishermen were arrested in Area 3PS where, as the previous speaker mentioned, there has been a long-standing practice of non-interference. Now, all of a sudden, France decided to make arrests for reasons that are very much its own. The arrests have been made. The Government tells us it will take action, but from what we have heard today, the Government's position and the action it proposes to take are not very convincing. Mr. Speaker, Canadians are appalled at the failure of this Government to take a strong stand.

This Government is not prepared to defend the interests of its fishermen and the people of the Atlantic region, and I was also appalled when I heard the Secretary of State for External Affairs, (Mr. Clark), tell us that we should not act too aggressively, because we might harm other regions in the country. The Secretary was more or less implying we should sacrifice the interests of Newfoundland fishermen to avoid harming people in other regions, and that, Mr. Speaker, is really appalling. And I also deplore the fact, that this Government sees this action by the French as just another bizarre incident. Mr. Speaker, you will agree that the action taken by the French is an insult to all Canadians, not just to the people of Newfoundland and the Atlantic region but to all Canadians from coast to coast.

The Government should take advantage of this opportunity to take a strong stand. I am not saying it should go to war, but just take a strong stand and show the Atlantic fishermen that it intends to defend their rights, because when we talk about Area 3PS, we are talking about cod and treaties and the livelihood of the people of the Atlantic region. Newfoundland is often mentioned because the people there are very close to Area 3PS, but the fish that swim in those waters move all over the Gulf, which means there is an impact on fishermen from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec as well. So the Government should take this opportunity to take a strong stand and tell the fishermen: Enough is enough, and we intend to tell the French we mean it!

We have the tools to show the French we mean what we say. These tools are the current negotiations for the purchase and construction of submarines. We are considering buying submarines worth over \$10 billion, and I don't think we need them, but in any case, negotiations are under way. So we should tell the French: If you don't want to negotiate in good faith, negotiations on the submarine deal are off and will stay that way until we settle the problem about the contested area.

Negotiations are also taking place between Air Canada and Airbus about the purchase of aircraft for a total of over \$1 billion. There again, the Government could take a strong stand and tell the French: Until we settle the fisheries dispute, negotiations with Airbus are off.

The Prime Minister who had planned to visit France sometime in May should take also this opportunity to tell the French: I have decided to postpone my visit because of the bad faith you have demonstrated in the St. Pierre and Miquelon fisheries affair. Also, Mr. Speaker, we should recall our Chargé D'affaires again to emphasize to the French that the action they took was serious and an affront to Canadians.

I suggest that if the Canadian Government showed some resolve, the French would certainly be more prepared to negotiate an agreement to end once and for all the problem in that area.

Mr. Speaker, I could have dealt with the Treaty, those who signed it and under what terms. I could have spent time describing what was or was not done. But we are now faced with the *de facto* situation of a Canadian fishing vessel which was illegally arrested. I therefore urge the Government to be firm and demonstrate to the French that we are not going to roll over, that we are going to defend our fishermen's rights and that the sooner we can settle this problem, the sooner the whole situation between France and Canada can get back to normal.

● (1420)

[*English*]

Mr. Fretz: Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose two or three questions to the Hon. Member who just spoke, the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud). I would like to remind the Hon. Member of New Brunswick's lobster